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The Flexible Syllabus

How to use an innovative approach to teaching writing intensive courses

By Dr. Michael Kent, Oklahoma
Dr. Maureen Taylor, Oklahoma
and Dr. Marcia Stratton, Alaska-Anchorage

Michael L. Kent, Ph.D., is associate professor of public relations at the Gaylord College of Journalism and Mass Communication at the University of Oklahoma. He studies mediated public relations and is interested in issues of technology and relationship building. Kent has taught courses in new technologies, management, public relations writing, design and writing.

Maureen Taylor, Ph.D., is the Gaylord Family Chair of Strategic Communication in the Gaylord College of Journalism and Mass Communication at the University of Oklahoma. Taylor’s research has appeared in Communication Monographs, Human Communication Research, Journal of Communication, Management Communication Quarterly, Gazette, Public Relations Review, Journal of Public Relations Research, Communication Studies and the Atlantic Journal of Communication. She has taught multiple public relations courses including research methods, writing, introduction to public relations, management, crisis communication and internal communication campaigns.

Marcia Stratton, Ph.D., studies rhetorical theory and criticism at the University of Alaska-Anchorage. She holds a bachelor’s degree in business, master’s in education and communication and a doctorate in communication. Her areas of interest are rhetoric, public address, culture, gender and communication.

Introduction

The Flexible Syllabus is suitable for many courses including Fundamentals of Public Relations; Public Relations Writing, Cases or Campaigns; Introduction to Journalism; International Communication; or Advertising.

In this model, a percentage of the course points (typically 20–30 percent) is left open so that students select assignments based on their own individual needs/desires. The instructor provides students with a list of “possible additional assignments” from which they can choose. Each assignment reflects a certain percentage of points. For instance, a student may decide to complete two 10 percent assignments for the flexible part of the grade. Another student may select one 20 percent assignment that allows him/her to complete a larger, more involved project.

Rationale

The Flexible Syllabus reflects a core set of exams and assignments that all students in the class complete. However, the instructor can provide variety in the types of assignments given to the students for the flexible portion of their course grade. The syllabus works much like the liberal arts curriculum where students are required to take a core of school-wide and departmental classes, but then take electives in areas of interest. The Flexible Syllabus exposes students to a greater variety of writing assignments than would normally be possible. More importantly, it allows students to tailor their writing projects to their professional interests. This is especially valuable when you have students with varying levels of writing ability in the same class.

Implementation

Assuming a public relations writing class:

- Assign the core assignments for the class. For example, an instructor might require two or three exams and three foundational writing assignments of everyone. These assignments and due dates are placed on the class schedule.

- The instructor then provides a list of potential assignments on the syllabus with a brief description of each to inform the students about their choices. For instance, the option of writing a speech might be listed with 1) a required word count (700 words), 2) suggested amount of points (15 percent); and 3) due date for all who select this option.

- It is important that the specific dates that assignments are due are also placed on the schedule either as “five percent assignment due…10 percent assignment due…” or “first individual assignment due…second individual assignment due…” etc. These dates become a part of the individual student’s contract with the professor.

- During the second week of class, students complete a course contract from a cafeteria list of writing assignments. All dates, percentages and details are listed on this contract.

Impact

Students love to have the freedom to select assignments that they feel fit their individual needs. Students learn the fundamental writing skills on the required assignments and then pursue their interests on the flexible assignments.

In public relations writing, some students may select a high percentage, multi-part writing assignment so that they can have one significant outcome (a Web site with four or five writing samples). Other students may select more assignments worth fewer points to reach their individual total.

In the new communication technology class, students can pick assignments ranging from writing/critiquing blogs, Web site design/critique, a research paper or content analysis.

In the international communication class, students can study news events from different international views, compare and contrast news coverage of different media outlets, compare product advertisements in different nations or analyze Web sites for international audiences.

Two of the authors allow the students to sign up for extra credit assignments as part of their contracts. Once contracted, these
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Two of the authors allow the students to sign up for extra credit assignments as part of their contracts. Once contracted, these
assignments become "required." Students who sign up for extra credit actually wind up doing more assignments than their peers. The experiential learning research suggests enormous value in this type educational outcome.

The impact on instructor morale is also dramatic. Often in the introductory journalism and mass communication classes, the students complete the same assignments each semester. These required assignments are foundational to their development as media professionals. The Flexible Syllabus allows for a different course to be taught without additional preparation. It also allows the instructor to test out new assignments that may eventually become a part of the foundation of the course.

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Mapping the News

How to engage students in understanding the world view presented in U.S. newspapers

By Dr. Karen E. Kline
Lock Haven

Karen E. Kline, Ph.D., is a professor at Lock Haven University. She teaches broadcast journalism, advertising and public relations as well as media studies courses in the Communication Media Program. She also serves as chairperson of the Department of Communication.

Introduction

While the world has grown interdependent, countries and their citizens often cling to parochial values, abetted by the practices of their major cultural institutions. This exercise challenges students to think about the world by examining the ways in which U.S. journalism depicts it. In small groups, students analyze issues of American newspapers to chart a "world news map" showing patterns of coverage across the geographic regions of the world. This assignment compels students to think about the selective representations of the world in American newspapers and the extent to which their own world views are limited.

I use this assignment in a course titled Media Literacy. However, it is applicable to any course in which students examine the news media. It is adaptable to analysis of various journalistic forms, including television newscasts and NPR broadcasts.

Rationale

With Web-based "news on demand" instantly accessible, many college students have become disengaged from traditional newspapers and shy away from journalism that doesn't serve their immediate needs and gratifications.

This assignment puts newspapers back into students' hands and encourages them to examine how the print media represent the world in digest form. By focusing on world news coverage, this activity takes students beyond their routine news habits and facilitates global awareness. The hands-on, collaborative nature of this exercise fosters peer interaction and teamwork, which enhance student learning.

Implementation

- Prior to the exercise, I locate a world map sized for mobility. Each group will receive several copies of the map, a supply of red and black markers and the written assignment.

- I visit the university library to organize the groups' tasks. U.S. newspapers can generally be divided into three categories: national (USA Today, Wall Street Journal or Christian Science Monitor), metropolitan and
Sample Student Selection

Demonstration Speech (10%): Write a ten-minute demonstration speech for the person who will be conducting the training on how to eat properly at the “dress for success” dinner. You will explain how to sit at a formal table, napkin etiquette, which utensil to use and when, which plate is your bread plate, etc. You should write the speech out word-for-word, prepare a handmade or professionally prepared type, prepare three expository note cards. Be sure to script in dramatic pauses, pauses for laughter, pronunciation (if foreign), etc. Paper copies of the first draft are due to me on the first day in the PRSSA to interview for this, do some research on your own. Be prepared to deliver this speech to your classmates on (or near) the due date. Bring in a proper table setting or use a table if no one will allow you to use one in their classroom.

Brochure (15%): Using some of the current Gaylord literature as a model, see Celia Perkins, Director of Communications, Gaylord, for what the specifications are on fonts, colors, etc. Develop three (one should be final draft after I approve the design) versions of a brochure featuring Gaylord Public Relations facilities (Meta Carstathen, Michael Kent, Maureen Taylor, Noelle Beken, etc.) and get approval. Include headshots for everyone (coordinate with Traci Coffman for Photographs). Include the following: a paragraph about each person, a list of the classes they teach/taught, their research. The size should be determined by you, 8.5” x 11” is probably too small for this. Final drafts will go to Celia Perkins.

Sample Student Selection

Poster, Billboard, Transit Sign (5%): You will design a poster and a billboard or transit sign (based on the parameters set up) that create the specified messages for each document (I must approve the final designs and messages before they are due). Include headshots for ever student who graduates in 2002 and those who graduate in 2011. The fact sheet should be at least two pages long and should include a front page, back cover. Inside, include brief biographies of the Advertising professors. Include headshots (coordinate with Traci Coffman for Photographs). Create three possible designs and me on a table for people to see, as well as one in the PRSSA to interview for this, do some research on your own. Be prepared to deliver this speech to your classmates on (or near) the due date. Bring in a proper table setting or use a table if no one will allow you to use one in their classroom.

Fact Sheet (10%): Visit Beloit College’s (www.beloit.edu/~publib/mindset/2010.php) mindset list and create a fact sheet that meets the following guidelines: Include at least six facts from students who graduate in 2002 and those who graduate in 2011. The fact sheet should be at least two pages long and should include a front page, back cover. Inside, include brief biographies of the Advertising professors. Include headshots (coordinate with Traci Coffman for Photographs). Create three possible designs and me on a table for people to see, as well as one in the PRSSA to interview for this, do some research on your own. Be prepared to deliver this speech to your classmates on (or near) the due date. Bring in a proper table setting or use a table if no one will allow you to use one in their classroom.

E-mail (5%): Write a five-page (single spaced) e-mail outlining your goals as a public relations professional. Make specific reference to how you will accomplish your goals, what types of positions (names, titles, organizations, etc.) you will apply for, and what skills you will develop and how you will hone them. Write the memo as a “planning document,” i.e., the tone will not be conversational but informative and prescriptive. Be specific and realistic in your response to each of the following prompts.

Memo (5%): Write a 1.5 page memo and send it to the Gaylord, as a public relations professional. Make specific reference to how you will accomplish your goals, what types of positions (names, titles, organizations, etc.) you will apply for, and what skills you will develop and how you will hone them. Write the memo as a “planning document,” i.e., the tone will not be conversational but informative and prescriptive. Be specific and realistic in your response to each of the following prompts.

Pamphlet (5%): Using some of the current Gaylord literature as a model, see Celia Perkins, Director of Communications, Gaylord, for what the specifications are on fonts, colors, etc. Create a one-page (double-sided, folded down the middle) pamphlet with a proper front page and at least three other possible photographs. Get copies from the OU PRSSA’s "Dr. Tindall's Success For Success" event, design a two-page front and back cover. Inside, include brief biographies of the Advertising professors. Include headshots (coordinate with Traci Coffman for Photographs). Create three possible designs and me on a table for people to see, as well as one in the PRSSA to interview for this, do some research on your own. Be prepared to deliver this speech to your classmates on (or near) the due date. Bring in a proper table setting or use a table if no one will allow you to use one in their classroom.

Photographs (10%): You can take photographs suitable for use on the Gaylord Web site or Gaylord publications. All photographs will be presented to Celia Perkins, Director of Publications, Gaylord, on a CD. All photo- graphs must be labeled with the name of the person in the photograph. You should obtain at least 100 “good” (screened and cleaned) photographs. Arrange the photographs into color proof sheets (about 9-12 per page). Obtain signed photo releases from everyone you photograph giving permission to use their image as mentioned above. Be sure that the photograhs are taken with a digital SLR (only) on the best setting so that they can be used in other classes. Include headshots for recent graduates and members for the departments’ home page using a consistent backdrop.

PERSUASIVE SPEECH (15%, 7-9 minutes): You will give this speech in class during the last few weeks of class. Assume that you have been invited to give an address to a meeting of new faculty members. Virtually every university in the country has new faculty orientation programs, including the University of Northern Colorado. You are delighted to be invited to give this address. This year (we do it every week for a semester here). Commonly, at such meetings, students are invited to come in and discuss topics like plagiarism, etc.

Your topics is as follows:

Students and professors (especially those over about 35) are increasingly at loggerheads about technology and its role in education. Many feel that the use of the latest technologies, particularly the computer, has shown the negative side effects of technology: television, video games, the internet, etc., as well as how tools like PowerPoint (lead to poor presentations), the internet, (facilitates cheating), social networking (leads to negative self disclosure and narcissism), do not actually improve education. And yet, many educators, politicians, younger professors, etc., continue to argue that technology is a panacea. Take the pro-technology side and write a persuasive speech that argues for better integration of technology in the classroom. Your task is to come up with a research paper on why you should teach new technology. Create arguments that prove that the technology IMPROVES education, etc. Alternatively, assume that a colleague is skeptical about the use of technology and write a speech that argues against the use of technology. Create arguments that prove that the technology actually HURTS some students, etc. Continue to argue that these negative impacts outweigh any positive impact that may result from using technology in the classroom. The fact sheet should be at this setting for this being a PRSSA meeting, etc.

Be sure to have AT LEAST 5 credible sources (not the internet, newspapers, magazines, textbooks, etc.). Be sure to use the proper data, statistics, graphs, etc. “Use all of the available means of persuasion: ethos, pathos, and logos.” Give an extemporaneous speech. Write an¸memo: Have a bibliography.

Sample Student Selection

Memo (5%): Write a 1.5 page (single spaced) memo outlining your goals as a public relations professional. Make specific reference to how you will accomplish your goals, what types of positions (names, titles, organizations, etc.) you will apply for, and what skills you will develop and how you will hone them. Write the memo as a “planning document,” i.e., the tone will not be conversational but informative and prescriptive. Be specific and realistic in your response to each of the following prompts.

Fact Sheet (10%): Create a fact sheet featuring the following professional organizations: AESJC (Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication), ICAE (International Communication Association), IABC (International Association of Business Communicators), Information (International Communication Association), ACE (Association of Commercial Editors). Get the professional content. Get copies from the OU PRSSA’s “Dr. Tindall's Success For Success” event, design a two-page front and back cover. Inside, include brief biographies of the Advertising professors. Include headshots (coordinate with Traci Coffman for Photographs). Create three possible designs and me on a table for people to see, as well as one in the PRSSA to interview for this, do some research on your own. Be prepared to deliver this speech to your classmates on (or near) the due date. Bring in a proper table setting or use a table if no one will allow you to use one in their classroom.

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Sample Student Selection

Letter of Invitation (5%): Write a 1.5 page, single-spaced, letter of invitation inviting one of major broadcast network newscasters to visit Gaylord for two days to conduct some research. Mention that you have done some research so that you can target your appeals directly to the person whom you select. Include a brief half-page manuscript explaining why you selected the person you select and why you expect to be successful. Be sure the arguments you make are not facile, pandering, or pleading. Also, be sure to mention in your letter what the broad impact is of coming besides money (is none available except for transportation, lodging, and food), or “satisfaction.”

News Release (5%): Write a seven-paragraph news release as per the news release handouts already distributed. Topic: Work for a statewide baking company that will release a line of sourdough bread products next month. In the release you should mention the types of products to be sold, give some background on sourdough and explain why you hope it will be well received, etc. Visit some Web sites or consult some cookbooks to learn about sourdough bread products.

Statement/Students (5%): Obtain a dozen samples of stationery and business cards. Select half-a-dozen professional looking designs that you can duplicate yourself. Create a proof package of both documents and present them to your classmates. Create an "order form" where people can insert their name, telephone, etc. (see me for examples). If you have picked an article, ask for a copy and read it. Then, write a release suitable for the Gaylord Web site talking about your proposal and explain none of these people have agreed to meet with you so you will need to politely contact them and ask for their assistance. You do not have to interview them for this, use their article and try to make your argument about them. Be sure to format and explain why you hope it will be well received.

Stationery/Business Cards (5%): Obtain a box of micro perforation business cards and some resume paper and create two pages of cards and a front and back of the resume. Create the releases. Be sure to include some facts about organic verses non-organic food products. Include some photos of the Gaylord campus suitable for postcards.

Speech (10%): Write a ten-minute after dinner speech suitable for a giving after a journalism or public relations banquet. Be sure to include specific references to Gaylord. You could use "Gaylord, the library," etc. in the photograph. You should obtain at least 100 "good" (screened and cleaned) photographs. Arrange the photographs on a proof sheet and bring them to me (about 9-12 per page). Obtain signed photo releases from everyone you photograph as (individuals) giving permission to use their image as mentioned above. If you take a crowd photograph, make sure to ask each individual for permission.

Brochure (10%): Create three versions and bring them to me for approval (I will select grading standards). Make a template for both documents that includes information about the dimensions to be used, placement on the page, all of the fonts/graphics to be used, and a one-page sample of what they should look like. See me for some ideas on how to format your proof page of printing instructions. Create three versions of each document (two you only need to have one printer instructions document).

Brochure (10%): Design three copies of a brochure about the classes in the public relations sequence at Gaylord. You will thumbnail (create mockups) of the three versions and bring them to me for approval (I will select grading standards). Go beyond what is in the catalog, use syllabi from the classes and draw upon your own experiences. Include at least two appropriate graphs to the brochure. Include quotes. Make a template for the brochure. Create specific references to Gaylord. Be sure to format and explain why you hope it will be well received.

News Conference or Event (10%): Write a 1.5-page letter pitching three events that tie Gaylord and the athletic department together. Be specific, provide details. Once I have seen the letter I will select the idea I like best. You are then responsible for proposing for the event that includes the following: When will the event happen? Where will it occur? What will it cost (include a detailed budget in tabular form). What are the goals of the event? How will you publicize the event and why is that the best approach (be specific, tactics to use, where to place them, why that method of publicity is expected to work, etc.)? What is the timeline for the event (be specific, include planning activities like producing materials, getting approval, printing, etc.)? What are the details of the event, etc.

Feature Story (10%): Write a 1500-word feature story about a “line of research” (not one project) by one of the Gaylord Faculty members. Be sure to discuss any new research submissions to recent or upcoming conferences and any influential work by the person whom you select. Be sure to read some of their articles/essays/projects and integrate specific reference to the work in the document. Assume the audience will be potential graduate students reading a Gaylord newsletter used as a recruiting tool.

Sample Student Selection

Letter (5%): Write a 1.5-page, single-spaced, letter of recommendation on behalf of a fellow student who will be receiving an award. Assume that you are writing to support an award for "Gaylord, Public Relations Student of the Year." Be sure to use specific references indicating your relationship with the potential award recipient. Be sure to address at least three paragraphs to the kinds of things that the award committee would find compelling. Hint: GPA is not something that impresses faculty members much. Follow my handbook on Business Letters and Memos on my Web page.

Flier (5%): Create three versions of a flier/poster (8.5” x 11”) suitable for passing around Gaylord announcing our "Student of the Year." Make all three versions asymmetrical. Include a photograph of the award recipient and briefly talk about what they will receive for winning (typically, students get something like a membership in a professional association, a plaque/certificate, dinner with some university official, etc.). Make the document resemble Gaylord materials (see Celia Perkins, Director of Communications, Gaylord, for sample materials).

Stationery/Business Cards (10%): Redesign the Gaylord stationery/business cards to give them a less formal, modern, look. Print off color proofs. Consider a template for both documents that includes information about the dimensions to be used, placement on the page, all of the fonts/graphics to be used, and a one-page sample of what they should look like. See me for some ideas on how to format your proof page of printing instructions. Create three versions of each document (two you only need to have one printer instructions document).

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Memo (5%): Interview two to three people, not students, (at least one of whom is a professor) about “LinkedIn” (Becky Heather Spencer in advising and Celia Perkins in the Dean’s office use it. Talk to them or ask them for names of people). Write a 1.5–2 page memo (follow my handout on memos: fac-

ulty-staff.ou.edu/K/Michael.L.Kent-1/PDFs/BusinessLetters &Memos.pdf) for your fellow students explaining what the technology offers. Do not just focus on the good, even if that is all your interviewees tell you. Be critical and give a balanced overview.

Pamphlet (10%): Create a four-page (two 8.5” x 11” pages folded and stapled in the middle) pamphlet describing the features of at least ten social networking Web sites. Design a proper front and back cover, number pages, include graphics, etc. Sites to consider might include: Bebo, Cyworld, Flickr, Friendster, Couchsurfing, LinkedIn, LiveJournal, Xanga, and many specialized social networking sites: Christian social networking (holypal.com; MyChurch.com), Jewish Social Networking (mjyworld.com, shmooze.com), Irish social networking (www.irishabroad.com), Muslim Social Networking (muslimworld.ning.com; musxlin.com), LDS Social Networking (www.ldslive.com), etc. Do not cover: Facebook, MySpace, Second Life, or Twitter. Begin by making thumbnail sketches on blank paper and include those with your first draft.

Stationery/Business Cards (15%): You will design stationery, letterhead, and business cards for a student organization called the Students for Freedom. SFF produces an “underground newspaper” each semester and is run by three undergraduates. The newspaper is often critical of OU and local politics. First, begin by obtaining at least ten samples of professional stationery, business cards, and envelopes (these will be submitted with your first draft). Second, write a one-page memo (in memo form) explaining what colors, typefaces, and images might be proper for an organization like SFF. Third, design no fewer than five possible combinations of letterhead, envelope, and stationery. These will be thumbnails and sketches. Fourth, once I approve one of the designs, you will create five variations on that design. Fifth, once I approve the final design (from your variations), you will create templates for each of the documents so that I can easily use them, and samples printed off on paper, envelopes, and cardstock (for business cards). The final templates should also be burned to a CD and submitted with the hard copies.

Photograph (5%): You will take photographs suitable for use on the Gaylord Web site or Gaylord publications. You must have a digital SLR for this (not a camera on your cell phone or a pocket camera). A SLR camera may be checked out from the booth in Gaylord with my permission. Find out what is required and see me for permission. All photographs will eventually be presented to Celia Perkins, Director of Publications, Gaylord, on a CD. All photographs should be color corrected, cropped, and labeled with the name of the people in the photograph. Get at least ten pictures of five professors (50 pictures) “teaching.” Do not use Jim Avery, we have plenty of pictures of him. You should obtain at least 30 “good” (screened and cleaned) photographs. Arrange the photographs into color proof sheets (about 9-12 per page). Be sure to create proof sheets for all of the pictures and separate proof sheets for the corrected pictures. Obtain signed photo releases from everyone you photograph giving permission to use their image as mentioned above. Be sure that the photographs are taken with a digital SLR (only) on the best setting so that they can be used in other publications. Photoshop will create proof sheets automatically. See me for instructions.

Media Kit (5%): Creating a media kit is a big endeavor. Since your other assignment will not have you creating sufficient content to fill a media kit, you will instead critique/analyze several of them. Come by my office and pick up three media kits. Write 4–6 double-spaced pages in APA style.

• Cover each of the following areas in your critique (jus-
tify your claims by reference to items in the kit and/or con-
cepts from the textbook):
• Does the kit contain adequate contact information for or-
ganizational members?
• What kind of kit do you have (media, investor, marketing, etc.)?
• What kind of kit do you have (media, investor, marketing, etc.)?
• What kind of kit do you have (media, investor, marketing, etc.)?
• Cover each of the following areas in your critique (jus-
tify your claims by reference to items in the kit and/or con-
cepts from the textbook):
• Does the kit contain adequate contact information for or-
ganizational members?
• What kind of kit do you have (media, investor, marketing, etc.)?
• What kind of kit do you have (media, investor, marketing, etc.)?
• What kind of kit do you have (media, investor, marketing, etc.)?

DuFran, Sabrina

Memo (5%): Interview two people, not students, about the professional risks involved in using Facebook, Myspace, etc. Write a 1.5–2 page memo (follow my handout on memos: fac-

ulty-staff.ou.edu/K/Michael.L.Kent-1/PDFs/BusinessLetters &Memos.pdf) for your fellow students explaining the risks. Contact me for two short newspaper articles on the subject before you begin writing.

Fliers (5%): Obtain a copy of the upcoming Gaylord events this fall from Kathy Adams, Dean’s office (she is busy, send her a nice e-mail explaining that you need it for this assign-
ment) and prepare a one-page flier announcing to your fellow students the events that are available to students. Get to-
gether with Katlin Francis who also needs this and ask once). Include at least one graphic in the flier and identify at least five other possible graphics downloaded from a stock photo site or taken yourself, not from the Web. Use InDesign, Photoshop, or Illustrator not Microsoft Word or Publisher. Use at least two colors (Black and something else) and not more than two fonts.
Interviews (20%). You will conduct interviews to be used when writing a historical background. (1) Conduct no fewer than six hours (total) of in-depth interviews with at least 6–8 of your family members (grandparents, aunts, uncles, etc.). Be sure to prepare an interview guide before you begin and ask about the same issues. (2) Record these interviews on a digital or analog recorder (and submit copies on a CD with your document). (3) Create transcripts of “loose transcription” for each interview. (4) Write a 2,000 word historical document “telling the story of your family.” Submit everything to me with the first draft.

Foerster, Meredith

Flier (5%): Katherine Jenson White and Elanie Steyn have another dream course next year. You will create a flier announcing some of the details of the event. First: obtain at least ten sample fliers from different sources. Note: You might find it useful to buy some design magazines like How for ideas. Second: write a half-page memo explaining what images, typography, colors, etc. would be appropriate. Third: draw at least ten thumbnails for possible design and get approval from KJW about which one to use. Fourth: based on KJW or Steyn’s choice, layout the flier in InDesign, Photo- shop, etc. (not Word, Microsoft Publisher, or any other Micro- soft program). E-mail me for the flier I prepared last year for KJW and Ralph Beliveau. Be sure to include images as appropriate taken from a stock photo Web site not from the internet.

Fact Sheet (10%): Visit Beloit College’s (www.beloit.edu/~pubaff/mindset/2010.php) mindset list and create a fact sheet that illustrates the differences between students who graduate in 2002 and those who graduate in 2012. The fact sheet should be at least two-pages long (back to back), color, and use at least three graphics taken from a stock photograph Web site (not the Web). Note: this should not just be “here it was then and here it is now.” Rather you should be creative and develop several ways of creatively comparing the lists.

Special Event (15%): You will plan the after dinner speech night for the class. (Do not drop the ball here. This needs to happen.) (1) Identify three possible venues. Note: we will want some privacy (a back room, etc. if possible), we need to be able to have room for about 20 people (there will be guests). The possible location needs to know that people will be people giving speeches, and that there will be multiple checks, 8 or 10 (you will encourage people to pair up to make checks easier in your e-mail message). (2) Get me a list of possible locations based on the feedback from your fellow students. (3) Contact each of the locations to see if we can reserve the space for the day of the event (see syllabus for the day), how much notice is needed, to be sure that there is no cost for “rental,” etc. Note: Do not make the reservation until you get confirmation from me. (4) Create an e-mail message inviting everyone to attend the event, letting them know where and when to attend the event, letting people know that they can bring guests, and reminding everyone to RSVP their guests ahead of time. Prepare a second e-mail to send the morning of the event to remind everyone. (5) Create a flier/poster to announce the event and post this in Gaylord make copies for the class, etc. (Again, after you have approval). See me for past posters used. (6) Prepare a program for the night of the event. See me for a sample.

Graham, Christina

News Release (5%): Write a seven-paragraph news release about an article that has recently been published by one of the general public relations faculty. Use an article not a book chapter, or chapter that has been published before but is only in press. Write the news release to be appropriate for the Gaylord News. Be sure to read the article before you begin writing. Be sure to include compelling quotations that are not cut and pasted from the article. Be sure to include details about the significance of the article and relate it to the target audience.

Feature Story (10%): Write a 1500-word feature story about the role of new technology in public relations. E-mail me for a chapter on the subject. This should be an “academic treatment” of the subject, for this assignment. Do not care what professionals on the Web say. The sources that you consult should be academic. Make the story interesting, include some anecdotes, include some stories about how much your fellow students or Gaylord faculty members know, etc. Assume this was for an online publication for Gaylord students. Do not just mimic the tone from the chapters/articles that you read —see Chapter 7— make this interesting and readable. Tell us something that we did not already know.

Stationery/Business Cards (15%): You will design stationery, letterhead, and business cards for a student chapter of the IABC. Visit the IABC Web site and find out what they do. First, begin by obtaining at least ten samples of professional stationery, business cards, and envelopes (these will be submitted with your first draft). Second, write a one-page you select. Be sure to read some of their articles/essays/projects and integrate specific reference to the work in the document. Assume the audience will be potential graduate students reading a Gaylord newsletter used as a recruiting tool. Focus on public relations. If the person you contact is not studying a public relations issue, pick someone else.
memo (in memo form) explaining what colors, typefaces, and images might be proper for an organization like the IABC.

Third, design no fewer than five possible combinations of letterhead, envelope, and stationery. These will be thumbnails and sketches. Fourth, once I approve one of the designs, you will create five variations on that design. Fifth, once I approve the final design (from your variations), you will create templates for each of the documents so that I can easily use them, and samples printed off on paper, envelopes, and cardstock (for business cards). The final templates should also be burned to a CD and submitted with the hard copies.

**Johnson, Christopher**

**Letter of invitation (5%):** Locate a public relations researcher or scholar who you think might be interesting to have visit Gaylord college to give a lecture to students. Write a one-and-a-half-page letter of invitation (Be sure to follow business letter format here: [faculty-staff.ou.edu/K/Michael.L.Kent1/PDFs/BusinessLetters&Memos.pdf]). Frame the letter as if we had funding for this already (we do). I.e., your goal is not to persuade them to come (on their own, etc.), your goal is to invite them to come some time this semester (assume they would come), and to make them feel honored to visit. Length: 500–750 words. Review the text on how to write such letters and review at least half-a-dozen samples from books etc. to learn the proper style.

**Feature Story (10%):** Write a 1,500-word feature story about the importance of international public relations skills. E-mail me a chapter on the subject. Your story should be suitable for a practitioner magazine like PRSA’s *PR Tactics*. The background text sources that you consult should be academic, however, you should also interview at least three public relations professionals with international experience. (Maureen Taylor and Katerina Tsutsura on the Gaylord Faculty do, contact each of them politely by e-mail—Taylor is out of the country right now—and ask for some time for an interview). Make the story interesting, include some anecdotes, include anecdotes in your story about international experiences, language and translation issues, cultural issues, etc. Try to tell your readers something that they do not already know.

**Brochure (15%):** Using some of the current Gaylord literature as a model, see Celia Perkins, Director of Communications, Gaylord, for what the specifications are on fonts, colors, etc. (1) Obtain at least a dozen samples of informational brochures. The “Welcome to Oklahoma” booth at the Texas border has about 100 brochures (submit these with your first draft). (2) Design ten possible brochure formats—thumbnail these designs each on a separate piece of paper. (3) Show me the designs and sample Gaylord documents and I will select one to be final draft. (4) Lay out the final brochure. Include headlines for each person featured. Feature three of the following Gaylord broadcasting faculty: Ken Fischer, Gerald Loessberg, Jason Balas, or Lynn Franklin. Highlight their areas of expertise, experience, courses taught, etc. Include headlines for everyone The size of the brochure should be determined by you. 8.5” x 11” is likely too small for all this. Final drafts will go to Celia Perkins.

**Knutson, Courtney**

**Letter 5%:** Your organization has received an angry letter from a customer (below). Using the recommendations for angry letters in the “Written Documents” chapter, and the framework below, write a 500–750 word letter responding to the customer. Be sure to follow business letter format here: [faculty-staff.ou.edu/K/Michael.L.Kent1/PDFs/BusinessLetters&Memos.pdf].

Letters responding to customer/client complaints should do the following

- Take responsibility and apologize/express remorse for what has happened.

- Explain your normally high standards by describing your “normal procedures” and how/why they were violated.

**Poster/Billboard (5%):** Visit some Web sites for printers and conduct some research on printing. The Web site ([www.PrintingForLess.com](http://www.PrintingForLess.com)) provides a lot of background information on printing in general but not posters or billboards. Find out about sizes, costs, photo resolution, printing options (color, materials, dpi, etc.), file requirements, etc. Everything relevant for *posters and billboards*. A search for “billboard printing” in Google will get you started on billboards. Then, prepare a one or two-page fact sheet outlining all of the details, including at least half-a-dozen links to publishers, etc. for your fellow students.

**Point of Purchase Display (5%):** Design a display for the advising office where literature on the various majors, faculty members, etc. might be displayed. Create a display that might accommodate at least 20 documents. Be sure to do the following: (1) Identify a dozen examples of displays that you think would be effective and include pictures of these with your first draft. (2) Create five to ten thumbnail drawings of your own of possible displays and include pictures of these with your first draft. (3) Identify which design you believe works best, and is not outrageously priced, and describe in a one page memo why that design would be best, where it could be obtained, how much it would cost, etc. (Be sure to follow business letter format here: [faculty-staff.ou.edu/K/Michael.L.Kent1/PDFs/BusinessLetters&Memos.pdf].)

**Stationery/Business cards (15%):** You will design stationery, letterhead, and business cards for a student chapter of the “WIC (Women in Communication).” Visit the WIC Web site and find out what they do. First, begin by obtaining at least ten samples of professional stationery, business cards, and envelopes (these will be submitted with your first draft). Second, write a one-page memo (in memo form) explaining what colors, typefaces, and images might be proper for an organization like the WIC. Third, design no fewer than five possible combinations of letterhead, envelope, and stationery. These will be thumbnails and sketches. Fourth, once I approve one of the designs, you will create five variations on that design. Fifth, once I approve the final design (from your variations), you will create templates for each of the documents so that I can easily use them, and samples printed off on paper, envelopes, and cardstock (for business cards). The final templates should also be burned to a CD and submitted with the hard copies.

**Massey, Kayla**

**Transit Signs (5%):** Like Courtney Knutson, above, you will research Transit signs. Identify all of the relevant features: sizes, placement on busses, bus stops, costs, duration and flexibility placement, etc. Then, based on what you learn, create a one or two-page fact sheet reporting the results to
the class. Be sure to include at least half-a-dozen links to sites/organizations that do this (including all local sources such as in OKC). Be sure to include graphics illustrating the possible options.

Photographs for (10%): Using the stock photography service that we have licensed for our students, locate, download, and burn to a CD with 50 images that might be used in various ways on the Gaylord Web site. Begin by writing a two-page memo (follow my handout on memos: faculty-staff.ou.edu/K/Michael.L.Kent/1/PDFs/BusinessLetters&Memos.pdf) explaining what types of images might be used, where on the Web site they might appear, and why images like you select would be good. Since this is for the Web, download low-res images. Create a proof sheet in Photoshop for the images you select. See me for details on this. Note: you will need to examine hundreds of images for this. I expect each image to be self-evidently useful given your memo and analysis. Thus, be prepared to scour the site, use multiple key words, etc.

A login you can use is: http://www.jiunlimited.com/en/sign_in/index

Username: KJGWgaylord2008 (username and password are case sensitive)
Password: Contact me by e-mail for it.

Stationary and Business Cards (15%): You will design student stationery and “business cards” (“calling cards,” really, used extensively throughout Europe and Asia but less common in the U.S.), based around Gaylord and PRSSA membership. First, begin by obtaining at least ten samples of professional stationary and business cards (these will be submitted with your first draft). Second, write a one-page memo in memo form, (Be sure to follow business letter format here: faculty-staff.ou.edu/K/Michael.L.Kent/1/PDFs/BusinessLetters&Memos.pdf) explaining what colors, typefaces, and images might be appropriate for this. Be sure to focus on what is “professional” and not what you might like—i.e., no script fonts, etc. Third, design no fewer than five possible combinations of letterhead, envelope, and stationery. These will be thumbnails and sketches. Fourth, once I approve one of the designs, you will create five variations on that design. Fifth, once I approve the final design (from your variations), you will print off samples on paper and cardstock.

O’Kelley, Kaitlyn

Stationery/Business Cards (10%): You will design personal stationery, letterhead, and business cards. First, begin by obtaining at least ten samples of professional stationery, business cards, and envelopes (these will be submitted with your first draft). Second, write a one-page memo (in memo format) explaining what colors, typefaces, and images might be appropriate for this. Be sure to focus on what is “professional” and not what you might like—i.e., no script fonts, etc. Third, design no fewer than five possible combinations of letterhead, envelope, and stationery. These will be thumbnails and sketches. Fourth, once I approve one of the designs, you will create five variations on that design. Fifth, once I approve the final design (from your variations), you will print off samples on paper and cardstock.

News Letter (10%): You will design a “Friends of Kaitlyn” newsletter. (1) Obtain at least ten sample newsletters and select one of them to be used as a model for your own newsletter. The samples must be submitted with your first draft. (2) Write a one-page memo (follow my handout on memos: faculty-staff.ou.edu/K/Michael.L.Kent/1/PDFs/BusinessLetters&Memos.pdf) explaining what typefaces you will use, what colors, and what images etc. Be specific and identify at least ten possible images from Jupiter that might be appropriate. In theory, most images would be pictures that you took but they do not have to be. Locate images from the Jupiter database (http://www.jiunlimited.com), not from Google. Write a 1,000 word essay about how this semester is going for your friends and indicate in the manuscript where images should be placed. Write the essay in APA style (i.e., double-spaced, 1” margins, etc.). Include everything (samples, memo, images, essay) with the first draft.

Media/Informational Kit (10%): You will critique several media/informational kits and then make one of your own. Come by my office and pick up three media kits. Write 4–6 double-spaced pages in APA style.

• Cover each of the following areas in your critique (justify your claims by reference to items in the kit and/or concepts from the textbook):
• Does the kit contain adequate contact information for organizational members?
• What kind of kit do you have (media, investor, marketing, etc.)?
• What sort of publics (customers, professionals, experts, investors, internet, television, radio, magazine, newspaper, etc.) are being targeted by the kit and why?
• Does the kit contain adequate information to write a feature story about the organization, individual, event, product, service, etc., the kit was prepared for?
• Does the kit contain adequate background information on the organization (and its members) for a journalist (customer, investor, etc.) who is new to the area, the profession, etc., to write a story or make an informed decision?
• Does the kit contain all of the appropriate information listed on the media kit checklist?
• Was the physical design of the kit appropriate given its area and why?
• Is the information organized “rhetorically?” i.e., has it been placed into the folder in the best way, are there items that seem out of place or do not belong?
• Do you find the kit compelling and why? Be specific. What other information/documents would have been useful to include? What news or feature stories might be written based on the content of your media kit? Be specific.
• How could the kit be improved? Be specific.

Next: Obtain a Gaylord or OU folder, and create an informational kit showcasing your own work. Essentially, you will create a mini portfolio. Review portfolios in the syllabus and review media kits in Chapter 7 before you begin. Submit your folder and essay together.

Rainer, Paul

PSAs (5%): Write scripts for (and record copies of) four versions of a PSA about a free lecture series about “media literacy” that will begin at Gaylord later this semester. Create four versions of the PSA: 15, 30, 45, and 60-second. Be sure to prepare four different PSA scripts and include information about music, SFX, narrator, etc.

Fact Sheet (10%): Obtain a book on using Photoshop (see me for suggestions). You should be able to inexpenisively order a used copy online (less than 10$), or borrow one from the library. Additionally, you will find tutorials on the Adobe Web site, and in Podcasts, etc. Learn how to create “contact sheets” and how to use Photomerge. Create a fact sheet for the class on how to do this. Be sure to include screen shots showing the process, step-by-step instructions, and a list of resources to learn more. At least two-pages with graphics and text. See me with questions.

Brochure (10%): Using one of the syllabi for a course in the public relations sequence that you have taken at Gaylord, design a brochure about the class. You will thumbnail (create mockups) at east the ten versions (front and back, to scale) and bring them to me for approval (I will select one to become a final draft document). Go beyond what is in the syllabus. Visit the professors Web page, include graphics/images appropriate to the class, etc. Include at least five appropriate photographs and five possible pull-quotes with your mock-ups. Make the brochure resemble other Gaylord materials (see Celia Perkins, Director of Communications, Gaylord, for
professionals need to be up ego, one of the top three papers argued that public relations

Fact Sheet (10%): Letters&Memos.pdf

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copies are fine if she cannot provide print copies. Then, you create the fact sheet, create five thumbnail sketches of possible designs and get approval on one of them from me. Be sure to follow the rules of effective design from Chapter 11 (e-mail me for a copy).

Letterhead/Business cards (10%): You will design personal stationery, letterhead, and business cards. First, begin by obtaining at least ten samples of professional stationery, business cards, and envelopes (these will be submitted with your first draft). Second, write a one-page memo (in memo form) explaining what colors, typefaces, and images might be appropriate for this. Be sure to focus on what is “professional” and not what you might like—i.e., no script fonts, etc. Third, design no fewer than five possible combinations of letterhead, envelope, and stationery. These will be thumbnails and sketches. Fourth, once I approve one of the designs, you will create five variations on that design. Fifth, once I approve the final design (from your variations), you will printed off samples on paper, envelopes, and cardstock (for business cards).

Van Tuyl, Jennifer

Letter (5%). Write a letter to the editor on an issue of importance related to Gaylord College or OU. Your letter should conform to the requirements of the newspaper you are sending the letter to (not the student newspaper). Include a copy of the length requirements, etc., from the newspaper with your first draft. The tone of the letter should be to support Gaylord or OU rather than to complain about something else. Your letter should be based on some actual issue or story from the newspaper if you have any hope of actually getting published (and you will actually mail this letter). Monitor the newspaper for several weeks until you find an issue of significance and then be prepared to get your letter written and edited within a few days of the story or news item.

Feature Story (10%): Write a 1,500 word feature story about the upcoming opening of Gaylord II. Contact Kathleen Adams, Dean’s office, and ask her if you can interview her about the building. Offer to take her to lunch somewhere (this is a standard interview technique) and after lunch, ask her questions about the new building, take notes, etc. Additionally, see if she can arrange a tour so you can really see how cool it will be. Ask Adams to recommend other you might talk with if you do not get enough from her. Include half-a-dozen photograph recommendations with your story.

Brochure (15%): Select your favorite public relations textbook from the last few years and create a promotional brochure for it. (1) Obtain at least a dozen samples of informational brochures. The “Welcome to Oklahoma” booth at the Texas border has about 100 brochures (submit these with your first draft). (2) Design ten possible brochure formats—thumbnail these design each on a separate piece of paper. (3) Show me the designs and sample documents and I will select one to be final draft. (4) Lay out the final brochure. Include graphic or images as appropriate. The size of the brochure should be determined by you. 8.5” x 11” is likely too small for all this. Final drafts will go to Celia Perkins.

Segun, Ibukunoluwa

Letter 5%: Write a letter of recommendation for one of your fellow students or professors to receive the following award: “Gaylord College Student (or Faculty) of the Year.” Write a 500–750 word letter. Be sure to follow business letter format here: <faculty-staff.ou.edu/K/Michael.L.Kent-1/PDFs/BusinessLetters&Memos.pdf>. The requirements of the award are that the nominee must have done something that demonstrates “excellence, professionalism, and compassion for his/her fellow students/faculty members.” See the “Written Documents” chapter for details here as well as books of sample letters. Direct the letter to Dean Joe Foote, Gaylord College of Journalism and Mass Communication, 395 W. Lindsey, Norman, OK 73019–4201 (Note: be sure to give the letter to me NOT Foote).

Poster (5%): Obtain copies of Posters used in recent Gaylord events like the Gaylord Prize from Celia Perkins. Electronic copies are fine if she cannot provide print copies. Then, you will redesign one of the posters. First: obtain at least a dozen samples of professional posters from graphic arts magazines, books, etc. (do not use posters from around campus as samples, and do not use “50-year-old” posters as samples). Second: sketch at least ten thumbnail designs on pieces of blank paper (to scale, and in paint or colored pencil if you are artistically inclined, or in pencil or pen otherwise). Third: write a memo explaining which of your ten choices is best (and better than the original poster) and why. Base your design and claims on principles of effective design from Chapter 11 (e-mail me for it). Be sure to follow business letter format here: <faculty-staff.ou.edu/K/Michael.L.Kent-1/PDFs/BusinessLetters&Memos.pdf>.

Fact Sheet (10%): At last year’s NCA convention in San Diego, one of the top three papers argued that public relations professionals need to be up-to-speed on environmental and political issues that have relevance to organizational interests. Examples included the oil supply and global warming (e-mail me for a copy of this section of the paper). Pick one of the big environmental issues facing the world today (see me for a special issue of New Scientist that describes dozens of issues). Read 6–10 “substantive” (more than 200 words) newspaper or magazine articles on the topic and create a two-page fact-sheet on the topic for your fellow public relations professionals. Be sure to include citations on the fact sheet to substantive sources that interested professionals might consult for more information. Before you create the fact sheet, create five thumbnail sketches of possible designs and get approval on one of them from me. Be sure to follow the rules of effective design from Chapter 11 (e-mail me for a copy).

Reames, Kiley

Memo (5%): Visit the Web sites for the IABC, PRSA, and WIC. Thoroughly explore each site and then write a 3–page memo (follow my handout on memos: faculty-staff.ou.edu/K/Michael.L.Kent-1/PDFs/BusinessLetters&Memos.pdf) for your fellow students explaining what membership in these organizations offers. Be sure to include specific examples and references, cites to the Web sites, etc.

Poster/Billboard (5%): Design a series of billboards for an advertising campaign for Gaylord hall. First: do some background research on billboards and then write a memo explaining your design choices: typography, color, etc. Additionally, in your memo, do a client analysis and explain what the symbols, icons, heroes, villains, etc. are for Gaylord College. Second: write the advertising copy for at least ten different versions of the sign and identify what you believe to be the three best slogans to use. Third: thumbnail at least ten different designs using proper dimensions for a billboard.

Plan Event (20%): You will plan the “First Gaylord Speech Competition.” Create the following: (1) letters of invitation for participants and judges (two letters); (2) thank you letters for judges/guests (one letter); (3) a poster for the event; (4) a five paragraph news release about the event; (5) speech evaluation forms and instructions for the judges; (6) a theme for the competition (which will go on the sign and other materials); (7) instructions for the participants and judges; (8) create award certificates for the winners. (8) In a memo: Identify three on campus venues. Identify appropriate prizes and where they will come from. Include a timeline for everything. Be sure everything conforms to Gaylord “House Style.” See me for samples.