

*Please print a copy of this syllabus for handy reference*

**Department of Sports Management  
George Mason University  
SPMT 480 Sport & Entertainment  
Spring Semester/2010  
Course Syllabus**

**Course Description**

This is a discussion course **not** a lecture course. Your participation will make the course interesting. You will participate each week on your own schedule at the GMU Blackboard Discussion site. You will only need to show up to the classroom for the final presentation.

This course covers the **ethics & public relations** issues in **sports/entertainment**- What is their relationship? What are the ethics & public relations concerns in the world of sports & entertainment management?

For this course, you will define your personal ethics, and then use those personal rules as guides to discuss public relations & ethics questions. We will examine current and recent cases in sports, and we will look to the entertainment world to compare and contrast with sports. We will look at public relations from a practical point of view and discuss issues and options that face professionals, from athletic directors and coaches to PR directors and agents face in their work.

I will post the weekly subject, but the specific discussion topics will come from you, the students.

The frame work of the course will come from a few very simple questions.

From a management and public relations point of view: What is the right thing to do?

What will help the organization best? Are they the same thing? What are the SWOTs (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats) in specific moments?

*Your Cinderella team makes it to the Sweet 16. How do you work with the coach and staff to help develop the strongest possible recruiting year for them?*

*A player's play off-field is more interesting than the team's play on the field. How do you work with the press, player, manager, or coach to address the issue to help turn it into a good situation?*

This course is very positive-thinking. If I named it, I would call it: Ethics & Public Relations in Sports & Entertainment. Hopefully, it will challenge you to become problem solvers and to think like leaders.

**Course Objectives**

To identify and recognize your own ethical and moral foundation; to recognize the importance of the relationship between sports/entertainment and the public; to affirm or modify that foundation in the light of the class work and discussions; and then to be able apply this personal framework to a series of ethical decisions made by individuals, leaders, and managers in the sports world.

## **Course Dates**

**January 19, 2010 to May11, 2010**

**Each week of class is a “Unit.”**

## **The Online Weekly Schedule**

The “online” class week begins on Monday and ends on Sunday. This is a typical week:

### **Monday:**

Unit’s Threaded Discussion Opens

Initial Response to the posted Unit Discussion Question

### **Tuesday – Saturday:**

Additional responses and interaction with your peers

and instructor (*See Participation and Discussion section*)

### **Sunday:**

Reflection Postings (*See Participation and Discussion section*)

## **Course Materials:**

**The assigned textbook for this course is:**

**Favorito, J. (2007) *Sports Publicity: A Practical Approach* Butterworth-Heinemann**

**Franklin Covey Mission Statement Builder**

<http://www.franklincovey.com/tc/resources/view/msb>

## **Instructor**

Bill Graham, MFA, Catholic University of America, Washington, DC

## **Instructor Biography**

**Bill Graham** is an executive communications coach and trainer whose clients’ range from bankers and architects to public school principals to television executives and people in the sports & entertainment world. He spent over a decade as Director of Creative Affairs for Procter & Gamble Productions, developing and training writers, supervising and noting stories, directing quantitative and qualitative research, tracking audience opinions, and collaborating with public relations. He is on the faculty of Seton Hall University where he teaches Communications Ethics, Public Relations, and Effective Presentations, and he is a regular guest lecturer in Engineering Management at Johns Hopkins University.

## **Instructor Contact Information**

E-mail: [bill@grahamcc.com](mailto:bill@grahamcc.com)

Phone, 917-705-0663

## **Online Learning**

To maintain solid graduate-level performance, it is recommended that you log in and interact in the units for about an hour per day, 4-5 days per week. (*About the equivalent of travel and attendance for on-campus course*) Be sure to take the time to read all of your classmates' posts so that your responses are interactive and engaging with them. The threaded discussions are the most important and valuable section of the class. The number of posts can be overwhelming for students who are new to online learning. Plan your time accordingly. Try not to let more than one day go by without checking into the discussions.

Read “Myths about Taking Online Classes” (*listed on the last 2 pages*). The general rule of thumb for a homework-to-credit-hour ratio for both face-to-face (f2f) and online classes is 2-3 hours of reading, writing and participation in the discussions per each hour of class time. Since this is a 3-credit course you should expect to spend *approximately* 6-9 hours per week:

- Completing the reading assignment,
- Researching academic responses,
- Formulating your own perspectives,
- And participating in the discussions.

With the online education, you get to choose which 6-9 hours in the week you invest in your course. To handle this workload, you must budget your time carefully. You cannot expect to do well if you drift in occasionally and make a few gratuitous comments or if you log in during the closing minutes of the class each week. Each time that you visit the discussions, be sure to leave an audit trail (*i.e., one or more responses that document your presence in the discussions*).

**Sunday Reflection**- You are also required to post a weekly reflection of your discussion for the week. Has it strengthened your perspective or changed it? Why?

### **Course Grading Policies**

The program presumes the highest level of professional performance and productivity. All students are expected to participate fully, and at the highest professional standards. The following grades will be given for the course:

**A:** Extraordinary work at this level indicates performance that sets new standards for each assignment. Consistently, work exceeds expectations.

**A-:** Excellent work at this level indicates performance just short of setting new standards for each assignment. Work exceeds expectations most of the time.

**B+:** Very good work at this level indicates performance above the standards and goals set for each assignment. Work exceeds expectations at times.

**B:** Acceptable work at this level indicates performance that meets the standards and goals set for each assignment.

**C (or C+):** Unacceptable work at this level, indicating performance that consistently does not meet the standards and goals set for each assignment.

**F:** Failure to deliver the required work at a satisfactory level.

**Academic Warning:** A final grade of B-, C+ or C is to be considered academic warning, indicating that the student is not performing up to standards for this program.

**Academic Dismissal:** A second grade of B-, C+ or C will require withdrawal from the learning team. If necessary, the academic administration of the program will recommend dismissal to the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences.

**Special Situations:** Let me know if you need time or a special situation arises. I am flexible and want you to succeed and will work with you in any situation based on *legitimate* needs.

**Late Assignments** I expect you to deliver your assignments on time. All assignments are due to be posted or emailed (as indicated in the assignment section) no later than **1:00am EST on the day after they are due**. Assignments that are late will have reduction in grade.

**Late Penalties:**

1 -2 days late: 5% point deduction

3-7 days late: 10% point deduction

8+ days late: 20% point deduction

If you are unable to log-on on a particular day that an assignment is due, you are responsible for turning in that assignment early in order to avoid late penalties. In cases of emergency, please contact me to make arrangements for turning in the assignment—in advance of the due date.

*Assignments will not be accepted after the last day of class.*

**PARTICIPATION AND DISCUSSIONS EXPECTATIONS**

**Discussion Questions**

The Online Discussions & Questions are a major part of this course and 42% of your final grade.

**Participation Grade**

The course is presented in 15 units. In each unit, you have the opportunity to earn up to 30 participation points to a maximum of 450 points total.

The unit-grading matrix used for participation in the discussions is:

**Weekly Blackboard Grade Table**

3-4 quality postings in the Discussions: 19-21 points (C) plus a Sunday reflection

5-7 quality postings in the Discussions: 22-24 points (B) plus a Sunday reflection

8+ quality postings in the Discussions: 25-30 points (A) plus a Sunday reflection

Outstanding participation includes active discussion and regular interaction with the other students and inspires additional thought about the subject being discussed. The participation is well written, and demonstrates command of the subject area. The discussion clearly shows the student synthesizes the materials and assignments. The student responds to the discussion points, with thoughtful interaction by incorporating the readings. **(A level)**

*An “A” level posting could include:*

1. Your response to the question.
2. Something from a reading to emphasize your point.
3. Something from your experience that helps interpret or translate a post into practical use.
4. An extension of the thread with another thought, question or point.

Satisfactory participation is considered acceptable participation in discussions. It includes active participation in the discussion with thoughtful contributions and integrated analysis of the topics

and readings. The student read the assignments and understands the main points. The student participates regularly and interacts with others. The student responds to the discussion points and student-led discussions. Students integrate the readings with comment and discussions. **(B level)**

Unsatisfactory participation is little or no interaction with the discussion, disruptive posts, or posts that are not well thought out. Students who do not respond to all the discussion points each week or who do not interact with the student-led discussions are not performing at a satisfactory level. The student is not keeping up with the discussions and is unprepared for the class. **(C to F level)**

***Remember: it is not just quantity; it is also quality of the postings. If you post 8 times in a conference but actually don't say a whole lot more than "I agree" or "that's a good point" or "thanks for sharing," you will not earn the full points. These are good for class morale but they don't stand-alone, you must add some substance as well.***

***If you also do all your postings on the last day or two of the Unit week, it will negatively impact your participation grade because it limits our ability to interact with you.***

***Missing discussions cannot be "made up." There are several reasons; but the primary one is that your colleagues cannot share in your discussion if you don't participate during the week.***

### **Timing**

Contributions to a discussion thread made after the end date for grading, 11:59 pm of the last day of the Unit (Sunday) as stated in the syllabus, will not be included in consideration of the grade. You must post in the Unit week; otherwise they will not count.

You should think about issues from a different perspective than you have before:

- Stretch beyond your set thinking to understand other paradigms.
- Challenge own belief system.
- Examine new/additional alternatives.

Your responses should stimulate the thinking of your classmates. A great deal of what you get out of this class will arise from our discussions. You should consider discussion units not as merely a "mandatory check-in requirement," but as an idea lab where challenges stimulate your thinking.

Listen to your classmates. They are sources of ideas and knowledge. Take pride in your posts, realizing that others will be reading them. Your posts should generate conversations that add value to the learning experience. As you post in the discussions, question if you are adding value.

Through the weekly questions, you get to examine the responses and challenge your own thoughts and beliefs, creating an interesting course. Continually work to make your arguments clear and concise. As you write your posts in this critical thinking environment, please:

- Remember that critical-thinking discussion is civil, well informed, and argues for or against an idea or point, not a person.
- Don't interpret critical questions/comments to mean that your responses are wrong, or that your classmates don't like or don't respect you.

- Don't get distracted by the confrontational connotations of the term "argument." An argument is simply what you construct to support your opinion, your claim. The more controversial the topic, the more learning that can take place.

### **Writing Standards**

There will be 4 papers: an ethics statement, a midterm paper, a partnered project, and a final paper. You should address the following guidelines when preparing your assignments:

#### **Content & Development 75%**

- All key elements of the assignment are covered in a substantive way.
- Content is comprehensive, accurate, and/or persuasive.
- Major points are stated clearly, organized logically, and supported by specific details.
- Where appropriate, the paper supports major points with theory relevant to the development of the ideas, and uses the vocabulary of the theory correctly.
- Theory and practice are integrated: linking theories to real-world work setting.
- Research is adequate and timely for the topic.

#### **Organization 10%**

- The structure of the paper is clear and easy to follow.
- The paper's organization emphasizes the central theme or purpose.
- Ideas flow in a logical sequence.
- The introduction provides sufficient background on the topic and previews major points.
- Paragraph transitions are logical and reinforce the flow of thought throughout the paper.
- The conclusion is logical and flows from the body of the paper.
- The conclusion reviews the major points.

#### **Grammar, Punctuation, & Spelling 5%**

- Rules of grammar, usage, and punctuation are followed, and spelling is correct.

#### **Format 5%**

- The paper, including citations and the reference page, follows guidelines given here.
- The paper is laid out effectively and uses reader-friendly aids (e.g., sections, summaries, table of contents, indices, and appendices), when appropriate.
- The paper utilizes references appropriately.
- Features like headings and italics aid in the readability of the paper and are not overused.
- The paper is neat, with attention given to format requirements.

#### **Readability & Style 5%**

- Sentences are complete, clear, and concise.
- Sentences are well constructed, with consistently strong, varied structure.
- Sentence transitions reinforce the flow of thought.
- Words used are precise and unambiguous.
- The tone is appropriate to the content and assignment.

## Course Assignments & Grading

Assignment	Responsibility	Points	Due Date
Ethics Statement Paper	Individual	100	<i>Due 1/24</i>
Midterm paper	Individual	150	<i>Due 2/28</i>
Point Counter Point	Team	150	<i>Due 3/28</i>
Discussions	Individual	450	<i>All Units</i>
Final presentation	Individual	150	<i>In Class- 5/11</i>

## Grading Scale

A	925 –1000 points
A-	900 – 924 points
B+	875 – 899 points
B	825 – 874 points
B-	800 – 824 points
C+	775 – 799 points
C	725 – 774 points
C-	700 – 724 points
F	< 699 points

## Posting Your Assignments

Assignments may be posted either through email or post them in the Blackboard Gradebook.

## Academic Integrity

A student must always submit work that represents his or her original words or ideas. If any words or ideas are used that do not represent the student's original words or ideas, the student must cite all relevant sources. Words or ideas that require citations include, but are not limited to, hardcopy or electronic publications, whether copyrighted or not, and verbal or visual communication when the content originates from an identifiable source. Academic dishonesty in an online learning environment could involve:

- Having a tutor or friend complete a portion of your assignments
- Having a reviewer make extensive revisions to an assignment
- Copying work submitted by another student to a public class meeting
- Using information from online information services without proper citation.

You are expected to use high standards of integrity in submitting your own work and in giving credit to the work, thoughts, ideas, and comments of others. If you cheat, it is not worth it. The penalties for plagiarism include a zero or a grade of "F" on the work in question and a grade of "F" in the course,

*"Plagiarism is the intentional or unintentional presentation of another person's idea or product as one's own. Plagiarism includes, but is not limited to the following: copying verbatim all or part of another's written work; using phrases, charts, figures, illustrations, or mathematical or scientific solutions without citing the source; paraphrasing ideas, conclusions, or research without citing the source; and using all or part of a literary plot, poem, film, musical score, or other artistic product without attributing the work to its creator. Students can avoid unintentional plagiarism by carefully accepted scholarly practices. Notes taken for papers and research projects should accurately record sources of material to be cited, quoted, paraphrased, or summarized, and papers should acknowledge these sources in footnotes."*

### **Confidentiality and Proprietary Information**

Students and faculty members must not share present or past employer information that would be considered proprietary, confidential, company-sensitive, or protected trade secrets. Students are encouraged to examine their organization's limitations on sharing information externally. Students and faculty members may appropriately choose to illustrate lessons from their experience without identifying specific employers or individuals by name.

### **Spring 2010 Course Schedule**

This is the general layout for the course. Because we are studying the ethics and public relations in sports, we will want the flexibility to adjust the topics as the course progresses.

<u>Course Week</u>	<u>Course Unit</u>	<u>Readings &amp; Assignments</u> <i>Subject to adjustments</i>	<u>Subjects</u>	<u>Unit Discussion</u>
1/19-1/24	1	Research "Ethics" <i>Ethical Statement Due 1/24</i>	Ethics	Discuss your research
1/25-1/31	2	Read Chapter 1 "Sports Publicity" plus find an article	Public Relations	Discussion
2/1-2/7	3	Read Chap 5 plus find an article	Cheating	BB Discussion
2/8-2/14	4	Read Chap 6 plus find an article	Steroids	BB Discussion
2/15-2/21	5	Find an article	College Athletes & Pay	BB Discussion
2/22-2/28	6	Read Chap 7 plus article <i>Midterm Due 2/28</i>	Individual & single sport issues	BB Discussion
3/1-3/7	7	Read Chap 11 plus find an article	Crisis Management	BB Discussion
3/8-3/14	None	Spring Break	*****	BB Discussion
3/15-3/21	8	Read Chap 9 plus article	Women in Sports	BB Discussion
3/22-3/28	9	To be posted <i>Team Project Due 3/28</i>	Television	BB Discussion
3/29-4/4	10	To be posted	Print Media	BB Discussion
4/5-4/11	11	To be posted	Radio	BB Discussion
4/12-4/18	12	To be posted	Sports as Entertainment	BB Discussion
4/19-4/25	13	To be posted	Politics/Environment	BB Discussion
4/26-5/2	14	To be posted	To be decided	BB Discussion
5/3-5/10	none	Exam prep	*****	
5/11	Exam	<i>Final presentation</i>	Final	<b>CLASSROOM</b>



## Myths about Taking Online Classes Graduate Communication Program or FAQs

*Thanks to UMUC's Drs. Leslie Dinauer and Dr. George Harding for sharing these myths.*

There are more similarities than differences between online and face-to-face (f2f) classes, including the material, assignments, and in a modified form, discussions. Some individuals expect online classes to be easier than f2f classes. In reality, online classes may be more difficult for some students, primarily because it is so easy to 'forget to go to class' (i.e., log on).

One fundamental difference between the two kinds of classes is the discussions. In the f2f class, all student discussions take place in real time (in person), so students do not have the opportunity to think about and research the topic, especially when the topic veers in an unexpected direction; in-class comments are 'top of the head'. In online class discussions, students have an opportunity to think about and research both their own and their classmates' positions, and provide URLs and other citations to support their position. Because of this research capability, online classes tend to have more rigor/substance than f2f classes.

Here are a series of prevalent myths about taking online courses, along with the facts concerning the myths.

**Myth 1:** My work schedule is demanding and variable (I can't be in a classroom regularly) so the online format is great for me. All I need to do is hand in the homework assignments and keep up with the reading (I don't need to waste time in discussions).

**Fact:** If you are not an active participant in the weekly online conferences, you will not successfully master the class material and there is a high probability that you will not earn a passing grade. Moreover, classroom participation is a significant part of your final grade. In the past there have been students who fail the class (i.e., receive a "C") because their participation grade has been so low as to pull their overall average below 80%.

**Myth 2:** Online format means I have time for more classes, which should be manageable after work.

**Fact:** Contrary to myth, online courses require more diligence and heavier participation than their f2f counterparts. Online course assignments have been designed to require approximately the same amount of time that you would spend if you were in a traditional class (class time plus homework time). The savings are in frictional costs (transportation time to and from class along with all the class time not directly related to learning the topic, breaks, chitchat, etc.). The rule of thumb for homework to class time for both f2f and online classes is 2-3 hours of homework for each hour of class time. In a 3-credit hour course one would expect to spend *at least* 9 hours per week to complete the readings and assignments and "in the classroom" (i.e., logged in to the classroom). Plan to log into the classroom 4-5 times each week to add your comments to the discussion (you cannot expect to do well if you drift in occasionally and make a few gratuitous comments). Each time that you visit the classroom, be sure to leave an audit trail (one or more responses that document your presence in the classroom).

**Myth 3:** Since I do not need to participate in every discussion, I can take time off from class.

**Fact:** You are responsible for the material covered in every unit, which may deviate from the assigned readings. What you get out of a class is directly proportional to what you put into it. If you do not actively participate in all phases of the classroom, you cheat yourself of the learning experience. Why then would you be willing to accept anything less than full participation with all of its benefits from the classroom?

**Myth 4:** After submitting my responses to the conferences, I need not visit the conference again that week.

**Fact:** You are expected to join the Conference 4-5 times a week and contribute/share your thoughts and comments to the ongoing discussions. As you can see from grading information interaction with your classmates is important to your participation grade.

**Myth 5:** I am a working adult with a family and other classes to attend. I like the flexibility of the online format. Whether I hand in an assignment on time or not should not affect my grade.

**Fact:** Although instructors will generally do everything possible to accommodate their students, as indicated in Myth 4 you are expected to participate in the discussions 4-5 times a week and to turn in work on time. With the flexibility of an online course, it is easy to let things slip until the last minute.

- Plan ahead.
- Avoid procrastination.
- Even out the workload and reduce the tension.
- Take the time you need to absorb material before moving on.

**Myth 6:** Why think about something that another student has given much thought to? If I copy or paste a few paragraphs here and there from the web, it saves me time and never hurts anyone.

**Fact:** Class and SHU policy are that students are expected to advance their opinions in their own words and where others' words or thoughts are used, to give appropriate citation. While the Internet makes it very easy to copy material, sophisticated tools are available that makes it easy to catch plagiarizers. Therefore, students should be diligent about citing sources.

**Myth 7:** Conference discussions are informal exchanges of ideas, so instructors should not expect high quality writing in my responses.

**Fact:** Just as athletes put forth their best efforts in practices in order to be fully prepared for official events, the classroom is the place to learn/practice expressing yourself professionally. As such, each effort should be a best effort. Without such practice, you will not be ready/prepared when required to produce quality writing on the job.

**Myth 8:** I am busier than everybody else. I can't be expected to contribute as much to the discussions.

**Fact:** Enrollment in this class is a professional commitment/business relationship on the part of the student, which needs to be treated very seriously. Life events will intrude, but it's the student's responsibility to make whatever adjustments may be required to fulfill this responsibility.

**Myth 9:** I am busier than everybody else in the class and my demanding schedule means I can expect exceptions to any/all of the above.

**Fact:** All students are evaluated using the same criteria. Blackboard does an excellent job of compiling statistics on the quantity (character and word counts) for each student. In addition to the Blackboard statistics, I also keep track of the content of your posts as well as the quality of writing in your responses.

**The ultimate fact:** To get the most out of your class, participate thoughtfully, professionally, consistently, and often.