

# **JOURNALISM 454: Sports Public Relations**

## *Spring 2008*

### **COURSE INFORMATION --**

Class number: 21350-R

Units: Two

Meets: Wednesday, 7-9:40 p.m., ASC 232

Midterm exam: March 12

Final project due: May 7, 7 p.m.

### **INSTRUCTOR --**

John Tamanaha

### **COURSE DESCRIPTION --**

This course is designed to introduce you to the wide-ranging field of sports public relations. The objective of this class is to prepare you for an entry-level position in the sports public relations field. The course will include discussions regarding various aspects of sports public relations, presentations by professionals associated to the field, writing assignments and role-playing exercises.

### **COURSE OUTCOMES --**

- Gain a clear understanding of the day-to-day responsibilities of sports PR professionals
- Develop attention-grabbing communication skills that reflect an understanding of news judgment
- Learn how to target key contacts and develop relationships within the marketplace
- Become adept at handling negative publicity and crisis situations
- Meet and learn from professionals in the sports PR field and related fields

### **GRADING --**

Weekly assignments	30%
Midterm exam	20%
Final project	30%
Class participation	20%

### **WEEKLY ASSIGNMENTS --**

Among the weekly assignments will be six writing exercises. Each will represent five percent of your final grade in the course. You will be graded not only on what you write, but also on how you write (grammar, typos, style, etc. will count). Clear and consistent

writing is required in the world of sports public relations. For the purposes of this class, we will use the AP Stylebook.

### **CLASS PARTICIPATION --**

Being able to communicate is one of the most important skills required to be an effective sports public relations professional. Talking is first and foremost among the communication skills necessary. Therefore, you are expected to interact frequently within the class with the instructor, fellow students and guest speakers. There are no dumb questions or ideas, only things that will compliment and move the discussion forward.

### **MIDTERM --**

Exam on March 12

### **FINAL PROJECT --**

You will be asked to formulate a comprehensive media plan for the Los Angeles Avengers as they prepare for the 2008 Arena Football League Playoffs. During the length of the course, you will be exposed to discussions, experiences and guest speakers that will ultimately prepare you for this real-time challenge. The details of the final project will be explained in class on Jan. 23.

### **ATTENDANCE --**

This class meets once a week and missing one session would mean missing out on a lot of valuable content. Perfect attendance is expected. If you cannot make it to a particular class, you must let the instructor know in advance.

### **LATE ASSIGNMENTS --**

Make-ups will be permitted only upon written verification of a medical emergency or illness. No other late assignments will be accepted.

### **OPTIONAL TEXTBOOK --**

*The Dream Job: Sports\$ Publicity, Promotion & Marketing*, third edition (revised Nov. 2004), by Melvin Helitzer, ISBN 0-9630387-2-9. There is a copy on reserve at Annenberg Resource Center in ASC 104. You will not be tested on any of the material included in *The Dream Job*. However, selected chapters are listed several times in the week-by-week portion of the syllabus. That material is available to students seeking additional understanding of topics that will be discussed throughout the course.

### **“OFF THE RECORD” --**

In order for this course to accurately prepare students for a job in the world of sports public relations, confidential and sensitive matters will often times be discussed, especially by guest speakers. Therefore, everything said within the class by the instructor, guest speakers or fellow students will be kept “off the record.” Comments or scenarios must not re-appear in any media outlet (including the Daily Trojan, KSCR and Trojan Vision) or personal blogs.

### **INTERNSHIPS --**

The value of professional internships as part of the overall educational experience of our students has long been recognized by the School of Journalism. Accordingly, while internships are not required for successful completion of this course, any student enrolled in this course who undertakes and completes an approved, non-paid internship during this semester shall earn academic extra credit herein of an amount equal to one percent of the total available semester points for this course.

### **PLAGIARISM/ACADEMIC INTEGRITY --**

Plagiarism is defined as taking ideas or writings from another and passing them off as one’s own; in journalism, this includes appropriating the reporting of another without clear attribution. The following is the Annenberg School of Journalism’s policy on academic integrity as published in the university catalogue: “Since its founding, the USC School of Journalism has maintained a commitment to the highest standards of ethical conduct and academic excellence. Any student found guilty of plagiarism, fabrication, cheating on examinations, or purchasing papers or other assignments will receive a failing grade in the course and will be dismissed as a major from the School of Journalism. There are no exceptions to the school’s policy.”

### **ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATIONS --**

Any students requesting academic accommodations based on a disability are required to register with Disability Services and Programs (DSP) each semester. A letter of verification for approved accommodations can be obtained from DSP when adequate documentation is filed. Please be sure the letter is delivered to the professor as early in the semester as possible. DSP is open Monday through Friday, 8:30 a.m.-5 p.m. The office is located in the Student Union room 301 and their phone number is (213) 740-0776.

### **CAVEAT --**

The information, procedures and schedule included in this syllabus are subject to change in the event of extenuating circumstances.

### **SPRING 2008 ACADEMIC CALENDAR --**

Classes begin: Jan. 14

Spring recess: March 17-22

Classes end: May 2

Study days (no classes or exams): May 3-6

Final exams: May 7-14

Commencement: May 16

## **WEEK-BY-WEEK --**

### **Wednesday, Jan. 16**

Introductions and course overview

Guest speaker: **Scott Wolf** (*L.A. Daily News – USC beat writer*)

Topic: Sports PR from a print journalist's perspective, what the media expects from us

Discussion: The root of sports public relations, *Sports Problem of the Week*

Assignments: Research Josh Rawitch and the Los Angeles Dodgers, check Blackboard for any required reading

Optional reading: The Dream Job, Chapters 1 and 2 (“The Dash for Cash” and “Information Director”)

### **Wednesday, Jan. 23**

Guest speaker: **Josh Rawitch** (*Dodgers director of public relations and broadcasting*)

Topic: Media relations for college sports, protecting a legacy, crafting an image

Discussion: The difference between sports PR at the professional and collegiate levels, final project details, *Sports Problem of the Week*

Assignments: “How would you ...?” essay, research Tim Tessalone and USC sports information, check Blackboard for any required reading

Optional reading: The Dream Job, Chapters 8 and 12 (“Important to Announce” and “Working with the Pros Who Write the Prose”)

### **Wednesday, Jan. 30**

#### **Field Trip: Galen Center**

Guest speaker: **Tim Tessalone** (*USC sports information director*)

Topic: Media relations for college sports (with behind-the-scenes tour of Galen Center)

Role-playing exercises: Mock press conferences

Assignments: Watch the Kansas at Colorado game (Sat., Feb. 2, ABC, 12:30 p.m.) and write a review the telecast from a PR perspective, research Petros Papadakis (AM 570's “Petros and Money Show” airs regularly on weekdays from 4 to 7 p.m.), check Blackboard for any required reading

Optional reading: The Dream Job, Chapters 4 and 5 (“Here's a Great Story” and “Hello. This is Bob Costas...”)

### **Wednesday, Feb. 6**

Guest speaker: **Petros Papadakis** (*AM 570/FSN/Spike TV*)

Topic: Sports PR from a radio and television journalist's perspective

Discussion: Super Bowl XLII, Kansas-Colorado game, *Sports Problem of the Week*

Assignments: Write two sample ledes and a targeted pitch letter for Papadakis feature, check Blackboard for any required reading

Optional reading: The Dream Job, Chapter 17 (“Taming the Beast”)

### **Wednesday, Feb. 13**

Guest speaker: **TBA**

Topic: TBA

Discussion: Crisis management, *Sports Problem of the Week*

Assignments: Research John Robinson, check Blackboard for any required reading

Optional reading: The Dream Job, Chapter 16 (“The Possible Dream”)

### **Wednesday, Feb. 20**

Guest speaker: **John Robinson** (*former USC and L.A. Rams head coach*)

Topic: Sports public relations from a head coach's perspective

Discussion: How to work with athletes and coaches, *Sports Problem of the Week*

Assignments: Write two sample ledes and a targeted pitch letter for Robinson feature, check Blackboard for any required reading

Optional reading: The Dream Job, Chapters 10 and 11 ("Creating the News" and "Getting Out the Message")

### **Friday, Feb. 29**

\*\*\* This takes the place of class on Feb. 27 \*\*\*

**Field Trip: L.A. Avengers vs. New Orleans VooDoo – Staples Center – 7:30 p.m.**

Each student will receive two tickets to the game.

Enjoy the action with your final project in mind.

Assignments: Research Monica Sears and Golden Boy Promotions, check Blackboard for any required reading

Optional reading: The Dream Job, Chapter 6 ("The 20-Second Soundbite")

### **Wednesday, March 5**

Guest speaker: **Monica Sears** (*Golden Boy Promotions public relations coordinator*)

Topic: Handling the PR for the Marquez-Pacquiao fight and PPV telecast on March 15

Discussion: Experience at the Avenger-VooDoo game, midterm exams, *Sports Problem of the Week*

Assignments: Review notes in preparation for midterm exam, check Blackboard for any required reading

### **Wednesday, March 12**

Discussion: Internet and new media, *Sports Problem of the Week*

Midterm exam

### **Wednesday, March 19**

No class ... Spring Break!

### **Wednesday, March 26**

Guest speaker: **Roger Horne** (*Pepperdine sports information director*)

Topic: Collegiate media relations at a small school vs. big school

Discussion: Midterm review, *Sports Problem of the Week*

Assignments: "How would you ...?" essay, check Blackboard for any required reading

Optional reading: The Dream Job, Chapter 3 ("Get It Out Fast")

### **Wednesday, April 2**

**Field Trip: Los Angeles Lakers vs. Portland Trail Blazers – Staples Center – 7:30 p.m.**

Pregame: Behind-the-scenes tour of Staples Center

Halftime: **John Black** (*Los Angeles Lakers public relations director*)

Postgame: Phil Jackson press conference and Laker player interview

Assignments: File wire service-style game story (e-mail 300 words by midnight), research Sonny Cumbie, check Blackboard for any required reading

**Wednesday, April 9**

Guest speaker: *Sonny Cumbie (Los Angeles Avengers quarterback)*

Topic: Sports PR from an athlete's perspective

Discussion: Experience at the Lakers-Trail Blazers game, *Sports Problem of the Week*

Assignments: Research Dennis Johnson and the Game Show Network, check Blackboard for any required reading

Optional reading: The Dream Job, Chapter 15 ("Making the Big Idea Work")

**Wednesday, April 16**

Guest speaker: *Dennis Johnson (GSN executive director of corporate communications)*

Topic: Sports television PR, working your way through the marketplace

Role-playing exercises: Mock press conferences

Assignments: Check Blackboard for any required reading, work on final project

**Wednesday, April 23**

Guest speaker: *TBA*

Topic: TBA

Discussion: Media plans and event promotions, *Sports Problem of the Week*

Assignments: Check Blackboard for any required reading, work on final project

**Wednesday, April 30**

Guest speaker: *Howard Sunkin (L.A. Dodgers senior vice president of public affairs)*

Topic: Vital importance of community relations

Discussion: Final project, *Sports Problem of the Week*

Assignment: Work on final project

**Wednesday, May 7**

Final project due