

# Field Experiences in Professional Communication

“Your Career Starts Here”

COM 398 – Spring 2011

Dates: January 17 – May 11, 2012

## Instructional Staff:

**Instructor:** Thomas A. Lamonica, Director of Field Experiences/Instructor of Public Relations  
**Office:** 456 Fell Hall  
**Phone:** 309.438.8578 (office) 309.846.1281 (cell)  
**E-mail:** talamon@ilstu.edu  
**Office hours:** 1:30-3 p.m. Monday, 1-4 p.m. Tuesday, 10 a.m.-noon Wednesday, 1-4 p.m. Thursday or by appointment (call my cell or email for a convenient time)

### Instructional

**Associate:** Laura Brebner, Graduate Assistant  
**E-mail:** ltbrebn@ilstu.edu  
**Office hours:** By appointment

## Course Description:

Field Experiences are an exciting step for students from classroom learning to professional experience and Comm. 398 is a course designed to enhance and support that experience for students. This class may be repeated for credit up to the university limit of 16 credit hours for professional practice. First internships for credit are, by policy, 3 hours each. Second and subsequent internships for credit may be obtained for a minimum of one hour credit. All interns should plan to put forth a minimum of 144 hours of professional effort to their internship.

By definition, a Field Experience is a cooperative professional experience in communication among:

- intern, student ... a student in the School of Communication on Field Experience;
  - employer ... where the Field Experience takes place;
  - supervisor ... the student's supervisor where the Field Experience takes place;
  - coordinator ... Field Experience faculty coordinator in the School of Communication at Illinois State University.
- 
- Students often excel in their field experiences. Please note that the success in this experience will depend on the student and how much extra effort and professionalism he/she is willing to put in.
  - The Field Experience should be instructional and fun. Field Experiences help students learn about the career choices, build a portfolio and network.

Some other key items define the course, its purpose and its value:

**Professionalism:** Essentially, interns are employees; they are expected to behave, act and dress in a way which respects the job, the employer, professional colleagues and organizational culture. Interns' experience may limit performance, but they should display a level of professional conduct equal to that of their professional peers and colleagues.

**Mentorship:** This defines the educational and professional relationship between interns and supervisors. It is a vital component of the internship experience and the reason internship supervisors should be professional communicators who have the leadership and experience to contribute to the professional education of interns.

**Reflection:** “Doing” and “learning” in a professional setting is the foundation of an internship, but the student's ability to place that experience in a meaningful context through reflective writing allows the student to better understand the value of the “doing” and “learning” at a higher level. “What I did” is important to an intern's development ... but writing coherently about “what I learned” raises the value.

**Evaluation:** Unlike most other classes, evaluation for Comm. 398 is a collaborative effort among the intern, the internship supervisor and the internship coordinator for three purposes:

- to help interns learn, improve, grow and network professionally from the internship;
- to expand and enhance interns' professional performance;
- to assist the internship coordinator in assigning a grade for a class which is part of interns' permanent academic record.

## Course Goals:

In the course of their internship and completing the requirements for Comm. 398, students will:

- gain first-hand knowledge and experience about the professional area that they have chosen, including:
  - the atmosphere, attitudes and values of an organization.
  - the purpose, structure and operation of an organization.
  - the communication functions and their relationship to an organization's mission and goals.
  - a view of the decision-making process in an organization.
- have the opportunity to engage in professional activities related to their studies;
- apply conceptual knowledge and skills learned in the classroom into the professional production with a purpose that impacts people;
- learn to deal with the challenges and opportunities of communicating in an organizational context;
- interact with supervisors and professional colleagues in order to learn about their work and receive feedback about their performance;
- experience dealing with the professional opportunities and responsibilities similar to those of graduates in their first professional positions.

## Internship Schedule:

**Starting date:** January 17<sup>th</sup> or later (this may vary)

**Last official work day for interns:** May 11<sup>th</sup> (the final official date for Spring term).

## Professional Practice:

**Time Commitment:** For each hour of credit earned, students are required to spend a minimum of 48 hours working on their internships, with a minimum of 144 per semester. This includes time spent both on location, and working on projects away from the internship's location, including research and on-line efforts. Most interns spend more than the required number of hours, and some internships require more hours because of the nature of the work and the business. **Students are urged to discuss time commitment with their supervisors before accepting, or beginning, an internship ... including planned time off for spring break.**

**Hourly Breakdown:** The Field Experiences program does not require documentation of hours worked. However, here is a "weekly breakdown" of professional practice hours for a 16-week semester:

Credit Hours	Semester Weeks	Average Weekly Internship Hours	Minimum Total Hours
1-3	16	9	144
4	16	12	192
5	16	15	240
6	16	18	288
7	16	21	336
8	16	24	384
9	16	27	432

**Communication About Commitment:** It is up to interns to initiate discussion about time commitment requirements before the semester begins. Students who wish to conclude their internships before the last scheduled date of the semester must secure written approval from their internship supervisors to the Director of Field Experiences.

## Communication:

The Field Experiences instructional staff DOES NOT share reflective essays produced by interns with their supervisors and, similarly DOES NOT share evaluations from supervisors with interns. However, the instructional staff reserves the right to encourage interns and supervisors to share information from those documents when the staff determines that it would be beneficial to the students.

## Evaluation of Interns:

The evaluation of students for this course is based on four components:

- Mid-term Evaluation from supervisor
- Final Evaluation from supervisor
- Reflective Essays from student interns
- Other influencing factors as determined by the internship director

**Internship Supervisor Evaluations (Midterm & Final):** Information provided by the internship supervisor will be the basis for 50% of the student's grade. Mid-term evaluations will be worth 20% of the final grade, final evaluations will be worth 30% of the final grade. The internship coordinator will provide a supervisor evaluation instrument to the internship supervisors approximately two weeks before the final return date. These evaluations will recommend a letter grade (A, B, C, D, F) for the student's performance and answer questions about their work, professional behavior, knowledge in the area, and professional appearance. The supervisor will also certify that students have completed the required number of hours for their internship. **The internship director is responsible for sending and collecting these evaluations** (although communication help from interns is sometimes valuable).

*Note: Please refer to calendar at the end of syllabus to see evaluation dates.*

Grades are awarded based on the quality of interns' professional performance and evaluated in the context of the general expectations from an upper division university student at Illinois State University. Letter grades recommended by internship supervisors should reflect the following standards:

**A** "if I had an opening for an entry-level person, this intern would receive an interview;"

**B** "I would recommend this intern for an entry-level position in our profession;"

**C** "this intern has behaved professionally and made an effort to accomplish tasks assigned."

**D** "the inconsistent effort and/or professional attitude of this intern has restricted the value of the experience."

**F** "this intern has consistently failed to demonstrate acceptable professional effort."

*Note: All supervisor evaluations are subject to final review and evaluation by the internship coordinator prior to an assigned grade by the internship coordinator.*

**Reflective Essays:** Please reread the definition of 'reflection' at the start of this syllabus as a reminder of why reflection is important to the internship experience. Since writing is still the No. 1 skill necessary to practice professional communication, these assignments ask interns to express themselves thoughtfully and professionally at the interns' highest level of performance.

• **Instructions for Reflective Essays.** Each intern should write three reflective essays of 250 to 500 words which respond to **one of the 13 prompts in the graphic below**. Each prompt asks that you reflect upon your experiences as an intern and write about people, conditions, efforts and/or projects. Interns may use each prompt only once. Please note 'blackout dates,' which mean that the 'blacked out' prompts cannot be selected for those assignments. Below are instructions for writing the Reflective Essays:

- Save as a "Word" file to your computer
  - **IMPORTANT:** Label the file with YOUR LAST NAME then the word "reflective" and the number of the reflective essay for that semester
  - Example of a label: LAMONICAreflective1
- In the heading, interns should include
  - their name
  - their employer's name
  - the number of that reflective essay
  - the subject matter of the reflective essay.
- When composing the essay, remember to put the subject in the context of your experience and your future. Keep in mind these questions:
  - **What?** (Describe the event, incident, individual or effort based on the subject of the essay ... use examples; describe situations and people which explain what happened.)
  - **So What?** (Why is the event, incident, individual or effort important? Who benefits? To whom was the effort valuable? What did you learn from it?)
  - **Now What?** (In what context is the event, incident, individual or effort important to the intern's internship AND to the intern's future efforts ... how does this open the door to future opportunities or responsibilities? How does it impact the organization's future, the supervisor's future, the intern's future?)
- Each essay should be professionally written, with plenty of time built in for each of the following:
  - A written draft.

- Reflection.
    - Revision and editing.
    - More reflection and revision.
    - Attention to Ranly’s “7 Cs” (listed below) to gain credibility for your writing.
    - Final editing and submission as a Word Document
    - Follow the instruction below to submit your essay
  - Interns who have questions or their own ideas to submit for the Reflective Essays assignment should contact the internship coordinator. Interns are encouraged to submit reflective essay topics not listed below.
- **Instructions for the Field Experiences Drop Box: Please send your essay electronically through the Field Experiences Drop Box. Please contact Field Experiences instructors with any questions.**
  - **Accessing the Field Experiences Drop Box :**
    1. Go to <https://casit.illinoisstate.edu/casfiles/>
    2. Enter your ULID and ULID password when prompted.
    3. Click “Field Experiences” in the “folders” column.
  - **Submitting Reflective Essays:**
    1. Click on the up arrow icon .
    2. Click on the “Add” button and select a document.
    3. Repeat step 2 if you need to submit more than one document
    4. Click “Upload”
    5. Click “Close” and check back in a week for your grade.
  - **To receive your grade:**
    1. To check your grade and review comments please access the drop box. Please give your instructors one week to grade your essay. Email either instructor if you do not have a grade after one week.
    2. Select the document you wish to download or select multiply by holding down the shift or control while clicking on the document
    3. Click the down arrow icon.
    4. Review the document and contact the instructor with any questions.

**Reflection Essay Prompts:**

Reflective Essays <i>(note: prompts which are 'blacked out' are not options for that essay number).</i>	Reflective Essay #1 (due February 9 <sup>th</sup> )	Reflective Essay #2 (due March 9 <sup>th</sup> )	Final Reflective Essay #3 (due April 9 <sup>th</sup> )
<i>The first big surprise of my internship came when ...</i>			
<i>I came to understand what my organization is about when ...</i>			
<i>Before I started this internship, I never would have believed that ...</i>			
<i>I improved a key professional skill when I had the opportunity to ...</i>			
<i>My organization demonstrates a commitment to civic engagement or community service by ...</i>			
<i>Success! When I completed this project, I knew I had contributed to my organization's goals by ...</i>			
<i>I gained a new perspective about group work when I collaborated with colleagues to ...</i>			
<i>I heard the voice of this communication professor when ...</i>			
<i>When I was asked to _____ in my internship, it was a good thing I had taken _____ class ...</i>			
<i>My ideas about leadership have gained better focus through ...</i>			
<i>A person (not my supervisor) who has helped me better understand our organization and my role in it ...</i>			
<i>Professionally, my internship has changed my mind about ...</i>			
<i>If I could begin this internship again, I would be sure to ...</i>			

# Internship Supervisor/Coordinator Evaluations:

Below students will find a description of the distribution of points in this course:

Assignment	Maximum Pts.	Percentage	Grade
Supervisor Midterm Evaluation	25	25	
Supervisor Final Evaluation	30	30	
Essays (3 essays, 15 pts. each)	15	45	
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	

The final grade is based on the following scale:

Grade	Percentage	Points
A	90 - 100	90-100
B	80 - 89	80-89
C	70 - 79	70-79
D	60 - 69	60-69
F	0 - 59	0-59

## Course Policies:

**Completed Form.** All interns must submit a completed “Internship Form” including email addresses, phone numbers and street addresses for both the student and the internship supervisor before being extended a permit to enroll. These can be submitted in person at the Field Experiences office (456 Fell), in the School of Communication Main Office (request the form be placed in the Field Experiences director’s mailbox) or via email to the director.

**ILSTU email.** All interns must have regular, daily access to an ilstu.edu email account. Other email accounts will not be used or recognized. Email is the primary course of communication.

**Late assignments may not be accepted.** In professional life, a missed assignment or blown deadline nearly always impacts the efforts of colleagues and/or results in a missed opportunity for the organization. Just as professionals cannot ‘blow-off’ assignments or deadlines, or just ‘not show up’ for assigned duties, interns must act responsibly and promptly when circumstances arise which impair their ability to be on time and meet deadlines. Students must notify BOTH the faculty coordinator and internship supervisor in the case of verifiable extenuating circumstances (i.e., family emergency) in advance of assignment due dates AND about missed scheduled time at the internship. Otherwise, exceptions will not be granted, and late assignments will not be accepted.

*Note: All dates for intern assignments for the semester are listed later in this document.*

**Academic dishonesty** is a serious offense. The work performed during this course—including the work done during your internship--should be your own, or should be submitted with appropriate credit or citation. Academic dishonesty or cheating will be dealt with in accordance with university guidelines. Academic dishonesty may result in a grade of F in this class and reported to the university. In short, don’t do it. It’s not worth it. Interns with questions about ‘appropriate credit or citation’ should ask their internship supervisor or the internship coordinator for clarification in advance of completing/submitting the assignment.

**Any planned absence or unavailability** should be discussed with the internship supervisor not later than the first week of the internship—including any planned time off during Spring Break (March 10-18). DO NOT assume that your internship supervisor is familiar with the Illinois State University semester schedule.

**Issues:** Interns and supervisors should contact the internship coordinator if they encounter problems or issues during the internship. Interns should expect to be challenged professionally and supervisors should understand their roles as mentors, but both should know that the faculty coordinator is available to help when needed.

**Commitment:** Interns and supervisors should know that the School of Communication at Illinois State University respects the value of their commitment to each other and to the student’s opportunity. Supervisors are expected to uphold the commitment to providing meaningful opportunities to the student from the first day of the internship to the last. Interns should understand that they are expected to fulfill their commitments to their organization and supervisor. **Interns who leave voluntarily or are dismissed by their internship prior to completion of the internship are subject to a grade of “F” for the term no matter what the previous graded material might indicate.**

*Any student needing to arrange a reasonable accommodation for a documented disability should contact Disability Concerns at 350 Fell Hall, 438-5853 (voice), 438-8620 (TDD).*

## Important Dates:

<b>Weeks</b>	<b>Dates</b>	<b>Activities (<i>Interns in italic; Supervisors in bold</i>)</b>
3-4	<i>Feb. 2-9</i>	<i>Reflective Essay #1</i>
	<b>Feb. 27</b>	<b>Midterm Evaluations Sent to Supervisors</b>
7-8	<i>March 2-9</i>	<i>Reflective Essay #2</i>
	<b>March 19</b>	<b>Midterm Evaluations Returned by Supervisors</b>
12-13	<i>April 2-9</i>	<i>Reflective Essay #3</i>
	<b>April 16</b>	<b>Final Evaluation Forms Sent to Supervisors</b>
	<b>May 4</b>	<b>Final Evaluations Returned from Supervisors</b>
	<b>May 11</b>	<i>Final Grades Recorded &amp; Reported</i>

## Don Ranly's 7 Cs to gain Credibility for your Writing

**CLEAR** -- Simple sentences, short paragraphs and familiar language give the reader an easier time to navigate the facts and enjoying the writing. Avoid jargon and, when in doubt, define terms.

**CONCISE** -- Cut the copy. Today's readers have more distractions and more demands on their 'reading time' than any other. Keep the story on point and don't feel compelled to include every available fact.

**CORRECT** -- Editing and proofreading are the keys to making the information correct and accurate.

**COMPLETE** --Who, what, when, where, why and how (5 W's and H) are still the essence of journalistic writing. Now, 'So What?' has become a key factor--involve the reader in the story by using RP (real people) as examples and guides and make sure you answer RA (who gives a rat's a--?) in the story.

**CONSISTENT** -- Using AP Stylebook and appropriate and consistent point of view makes reading easier.

**COHERENT** -- Transition is the key to coherence. Outlining stories before writing, or 'pre-writing' certain aspects of the story can provide the basis for cohesion, but transition is always necessary.

**CREATIVE** -- Be interesting. Be audience-based. Use nouns, not adverbs and adjectives to describe. Use examples. Make/use comparisons, similes, metaphors, measurements.