Topics in Mass Communications: Event Planning

JMC:3185:0005
The University of Iowa
School of Journalism & Mass Communication

Instructor: Heather Spangler

Location: E126 AJB

Time: 3:30-4:45 p.m. Tuesdays & Thursdays

Office Hours: Before and after class and by appointment.

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*Email is the best way to reach me—my voicemail goes unchecked for days. Days!

Course Overview:
Event planning is a growing, changing industry that allows journalists to employ their communication, marketing, social media, and project management skills. In this course we will explore the event planning field through speakers, research, and hands-on experiences.

Prerequisite and requirements:
Students must be willing and able to put in time outside of class to carry out events.

Readings:
This course does not use a required text. Supplementary readings and resources will be posted to ICON.

Major Assignments:
Major assignment sheets are attached at the end of this syllabus. Each assignment will be discussed in more detail in a timely manner, but here is the gist:

- **Attendance & Participation:** 30 points (1 point for each class meeting, plus 3 flex points to reward extra effort). I do take attendance every day.
- **Observation:** Each student will attend a medium or large-scale event. You will observe and report on successes and failures of the event. (30 points)
- **Dream Job Report:** Identify a person working in what you feel is a dream job in event planning. Interview that person and prepare a written report. (20 points)
- **Speaker preparation and response:** You will submit 5 questions for each guest speaker by the start of the class period before their visit via a discussion board, and a 3+ paragraph response to
their visit via an ICON dropbox by the beginning of the next class period after their visit. (10 points per guest = 40 points)

- **Solo Event:** You will identify a client in any sector you choose, communicate with the client about their event planning needs or interests, and produce a plan for an event that the client could choose to carry out. (100 points)

- **Team Event:** We will divide the class into teams. Each group will take the lead on planning and carrying out an event. I have made arrangements with entities willing to let our class be involved in their events and will connect you with your clients. You will be graded on the event’s success based on a written report you will complete as well as my observations and surveys to be completed by your classmates and clients. (60 points.)

- **Team Event Updates:** At four points throughout the semester (Weeks 3, 7, 11, & 14), teams will present plans and updates to the class. While not every member of the team will likely present each time, each member will submit via ICON a written update detailing tasks completed, tasks to do before the next update, and overall feedback about the team planning process. (10 points each = 40 points)

**Grading:**

- 99-100% A+  88-89% B+  78-79% C+  68-69% D+
- 94-98% A  84-87% B  74-77% C  63-67% D
- 90-93% A-  80-83% B-  70-73% C-  60-62% D-

**Attendance:**

I aim to make each meeting essential and meaningful, so please plan to attend every session or risk missing out on something important. You cannot be successful in this class if you are not consistently present and prepared. Out of respect for your classmates and our schedule, please also arrive on time and stay for the entire class period. Failing to do so will impact your grade.

Students who must miss class are accountable for all material presented and assignments given during their absence. It is your responsibility to communicate with me or your classmates to see what you need to know for the next session and to turn in any work that was due during the missed class period prior to the next meeting. In-class work may not be made up.

**Late Work & Early Work**

As journalists, it’s essential that you meet deadlines with no exceptions. I will accept late work only in extreme circumstances, including an utterly debilitating illness or a documented family crisis. It is important that you communicate with me as soon as possible if you feel you will miss turning in an assignment and provide adequate documentation to prove your given excuse.

On the other hand, early work is accepted and celebrated in this course. Event planners must have an excellent sense of what needs to be done when to maximize productivity and success. I’m giving you all of the course assignment details now. If you wish to begin working on your assignments and turn them in before the deadlines, be my guest. Please check in with me and let me know of your plans in case there’s anything you need to know before you dig in.
The College of Liberal Arts and Sciences Policies:

Administrative Home
The College of Liberal Arts and Sciences is the administrative home of this course and governs matters such as the add/drop deadlines, the second-grade-only option, and other related issues. Different colleges may have different policies. Questions may be addressed to 120 Schaeffer Hall or see the CLAS Student Academic Handbook [www.clas.uiowa.edu/students/academic_handbook/index.shtml].

Academic Fraud
Plagiarism and any other activities when students present work that is not their own are academic fraud. Academic fraud is a serious matter and is reported to the departmental DEO and to the Associate Dean for Undergraduate Programs and Curriculum. Instructors and DEOs decide on appropriate consequences at the departmental level while the Associate Dean enforces additional consequences at the collegiate level. See the CLAS Student Academic Handbook.

Making a Suggestion or Complaint
Students with a suggestion or complaint should first visit the instructor, then the course supervisor, and then the departmental DEO. Complaints must be made within six months of the incident. See the CLAS Student Academic Handbook.

Accommodations for Disabilities
A student seeking academic accommodations should first register with Student Disability Services and then meet privately with the course instructor to make particular arrangements. See www.uiowa.edu/~sds/ for more information.

Understanding Sexual Harassment
Sexual harassment subverts the mission of the University and threatens the well-being of students, faculty, and staff. All members of the UI community have a responsibility to uphold this mission and to contribute to a safe environment that enhances learning. Incidents of sexual harassment should be reported immediately. See the UI Comprehensive Guide on Sexual Harassment at www.uiowa.edu/~eod/policies/sexual-harassment-guide/index.html for assistance, definitions, and the full University policy.

Reacting Safely to Severe Weather
In severe weather, class members should seek appropriate shelter immediately, leaving the classroom if necessary. The class will continue if possible when the event is over. (Operations Manual, Part IV, 16. See items e, h, and i.)
Course Objectives/The Iowa Dozen:

We learn to ...

1. Write correctly, clearly and well.
2. Conduct research and gather information responsibly.
3. Edit and evaluate carefully.
4. Use media technologies thoughtfully.
5. Apply statistical concepts accurately.

We value ...

6. Free speech and First Amendment principles for all individuals and groups.
7. A diverse global community.
8. Creativity and independence.

We explore ...

10. Theories and concepts.
11. The history, structure and economy of media institutions
12. The role of media in shaping cultures.
Schedule:

Week 1:
Thursday, Jan. 22: Event teams assigned. Teams meet and review basic event information, establish preliminary roles. Discussion: Doodle.

Week 2:
Tuesday, Jan. 27: Discussion: Trello, budgets.
Thursday, Jan. 29: Discussion: Pinterest, exemplars.

Week 3:
Tuesday, Feb. 3: Team 1 presents three plans for feedback.
Thursday, Feb. 7: Team 2 presents three plans for feedback.

Week 4:
Tuesday, Feb. 10: Team 1 presents to client.
Thursday, Feb. 12: Team 2 presents to client.

Week 5:
Thursday, Feb. 19: Discussion: Green events.

Week 6:
Tuesday, Feb. 24: Guest Speaker: Emily McMahon, Development Director for IC Summer of the Arts, owner of Soiree, a private events company. [https://www.facebook.com/soireeiowa?ref=br_tf](https://www.facebook.com/soireeiowa?ref=br_tf)
Thursday, Feb. 26: Discussion: Event marketing and social media.

Week 7:
Tuesday, March 3: Team 1 Update.
Thursday, March 5: Team 2 Update.

Week 8:
Tuesday, March 10: Guest Speaker: Michael Stokes, UI President Sally Mason’s Director of Events. [http://president.uiowa.edu/presidents-office](http://president.uiowa.edu/presidents-office)
Thursday, March 12: Discussion: Crisis Management.

Week 9:
**SPRING BREAK** March 15-22.

Week 10:
Tuesday, March 24: Team meetings. Due: Observation Assignment. Assigned: Solo Event Assignment.
Thursday, March 26: Event Attendance follow-up.

Week 11:
Tuesday, March 31: Team 1 Update.
Thursday, April 2: Team 2 Update.

Week 12:
Tuesday, April 7: Guest Speaker: Katherine Stuppi, Marketing Events Manager at Google.
Thursday, April 9: Due: Dream Job. Internship mingling event.

Week 13:
Tuesday, April 14: Guest Speaker: Andre Perry, Executive Director at the Englert, co-founder and director of Mission Creek Festival. [http://creativecorridor.co/story/andre-perry/](http://creativecorridor.co/story/andre-perry/).
Thursday, April 16: Work Day.

Week 14:
Tuesday, April 21: Team 1 Update.
Thursday, April 23: Team 2 Update.

Week 15:
Tuesday, April 28: Clients Visit.
Thursday, April 30: Due: Solo Event Assignment.

Week 16:
Tuesday, May 5: Work Day. End of course evaluations.
Thursday, May 7: Guest Speaker—Field Trip? Stay tuned. No questions or reflections due for this one.

*Week 17: FINALS WEEK*
Saturday, May 9: Hospice Event.
Friday, May 15: SJMC Event.

{{PS: It’s important to be flexible! Please note that this is a tentative schedule. Unplanned opportunities and challenges may require changes. }}
We are lucky to have some interesting, successful event planners join us for in-depth conversations about their work. To help our guests know that we are engaged, and to make the most out of their visits, you should conduct a little research on each person and their work in advance.

**Part I (5 points):** Based on that research, please post at least 3 questions you'd like to ask the speakers in the proper ICON discussion forum least 48 hours in advance of their visits.

I will likely browse through the posts and let our speakers know about the topics you would most like them to cover.

You should plan to ask one of your questions if there’s a lull or an appropriate time. There’s nothing I hate more than crickets when a speaker is willing to answer questions.

**Part II (5 points):** By the start of the class meeting following the visit, please post to the proper ICON dropbox a 3+ paragraph response to the speaker discussing at least three things you learned or found interesting.

**Speaker dates:**

Feb. 24: Emily McMahon—Iowa City Summer of the Arts, Soiree

March 10: Michael Stokes—UI President’s mansion

April 7: Katherine Stuppi—Google

April 14: Andre Perry—The Englert, Mission Creek Festival
Observation Assignment  
Due March 24  
30 Points

If you are a human being, chances are you’ve attended several events in your life that involved professional planning. However, unless something was particularly awful or terrific, you probably didn’t give much thought to the work that went into planning and carrying out these events. That is about to change.

Event planners attend events with their eyes open to detail. They notice choices that planners made from the way the event was promoted, how people flow through the event, the vendors the event utilizes, how the event is staffed, decorations, how the event engages participants, and more. They do this in order to store ideas of what to do and what not to do at their own events.

With this in mind, each student will attend a medium or large-scale event and observe it as an event planner. There should be at least 50 participants at your event.

I prefer that we have a wide variety of events to discuss, rather than 42 people all attending Brr Fest... To help make this possible, I’ve set up an ICON discussion board where you should post the name and date of the event you will attend. If more than 4 people have posted that they plan to attend an event, consider that event closed and choose another.

You will:
1) Attend the event to observe successes and failures of the event. Take copious notes and even photos if appropriate, so that you can give a vivid description of the event.
2) At the event, interview three attendees about their experiences.

You will organize your findings into a PowerPoint or Prezi and submit your presentation file and additional notes via ICON. As time permits, several students will share their presentations with the class on March 26. If you are willing to share or if you are particularly petrified by the idea, please let me know when you submit your file on ICON.
Dream Job Report
Due April 9
20 Points

Our Event Planning 101 discussion on Day 1 introduced you to many fields within event planning. This assignment has three steps:

1) Identify a person working in what you feel is a dream job in the event planning field.
2) Interview that person via email or over the phone about his or her work and how he or she came to be in such a great position.
3) Prepare a minimum 2-page written report about your interviewee and his or her fantastic job. Submit this to ICON by April 9.

Helpful Hint: Event planners are busy people. It would be wise for you to contact your top choice early and have a Plan B and even Plan C ready in case you don’t hear back in a timely manner. Your deadline is firm.
Solo Event Assignment
Due April 30
100 Points

This is your chance to call all the shots! Identify a client in any sector you choose, communicate with the client about their event planning needs or interests, and produce a plan for an event that the client could choose to carry out.

Grading:
You will be graded based on incorporation of course content and ideas, professionalism, attention to detail, evidence of research, potential for event plans to be implemented, as well as spelling, grammar, and organization.

Client & Event Parameters:
1) You should not be currently affiliated with the client—no planning something for an organization or business where you already have insider knowledge and access.
2) The event you plan should require in-depth thinking and research to allow you to gain meaningful experience. Choose an event of appropriate scope. A brownbag lunch for 10 people is too simple. A week-long international conference with 10 locations is too complicated.
3) This should be a new event, not a revamping of an existing event.

Details:
Your ICON submission should be in one Word document with an embedded spreadsheet and links to external components on Trello and Pinterest. Be sure your settings allow me to access your work, or, if you’d rather, invite me to join your boards privately. This written report should be specific, in depth and a go-to document to actually make this event happen. It should include:

1) Background information on the client.
2) Notes/bullet points from your client interview about event goals and preferences.
3) Information about competitors’ events or similar events.
4) Specific event plans including:
   a. Venue
      i. A description of where the event should take place and why.
         1. Contact information for venue representatives (who has the keys?)
         2. Details for guests about parking, restrooms, whatever else they’ll need to know.
      ii. Two alternative sites in case your client prefers other options.
      iii. If you’re planning an outdoor event, a back-up plan for inclement weather.
   b. Guests
      i. Who is the target audience for this event?
      ii. How many people are you planning for and how did you arrive at that number?
   c. Vendors (PINTEREST)
      i. Who will provide food, decorations, staffing, entertainment, etc.?
      ii. What specifics can you share with each vendor?
         1. Proposed menu.
2. Decoration vision.
3. Space set up.
4. Staffing needs/tasks.

d. Activities (PINTEREST, TRELLO)
   i. What will happen at your event?
   ii. What is your proposed schedule of activities at the event?

e. Estimated costs (GOOGLE DOC or Excel spreadsheet embedded into your Word Doc, please).
   i. This should be as detailed and accurate as possible.
   ii. Include options for shaving costs whenever possible, to allow flexibility.

f. Your plans for promoting the event.
   i. How will you reach out to potential guests?
   ii. How will you collect RSVP information (if relevant)?

g. Social Media component
   i. What role will social media play leading up to your event?
   ii. How will social media be incorporated in your event?
   iii. Post-event?

h. Sustainability details.
   i. What will be the environmental impact of the event?
   ii. What ideas do you have to minimize that impact?

i. Crisis Management
   i. What crises can you anticipate?
   ii. How will you prepare to prevent and face these anticipated crises?

j. Plans for measuring the event’s success.

k. A timeline with task list for implementing the event. (TRELLO)

l. Any other details pertinent to your specific event.

External Components:
1) Trello: Please provide links to two Trello boards.
   a. Task list for planning the event.
   b. Task list for the day of the event.

2) Pinterest: Please create a vision board to gather ideas and specific examples.
   a. Venue
   b. Menu
   c. Décor
   d. Entertainment
   e. Activities
   f. Etc.
Group Event Assignment  
May 9 or 15  
100 Points

Each member of our course will also be a member of a smaller team. Each team will be responsible for carrying out one major event.

You will collaborate on the overall event, but each team member will have individual responsibilities and will meet individual requirements and milestones for points along the way. Each teammate will receive an individual grade. It is in your best interest to put forth your best effort and support your teammates.

Milestones and Points breakdown:

40: Written Updates and In-Class Presentations

At four points throughout the semester (Weeks 3, 7, 11, & 14), teams will present plans and updates to the class. While not every member of the team will likely present each time, each member will submit via ICON a 1-2 page written update detailing tasks completed, tasks to do before the next update, and overall feedback about the team planning process. (10 points each = 40 points)

50 points: Event Execution

May 9 or May 15: It’s the big moment! You will be graded based on your ability to work successfully with your team and to please your client as well as the professional, organized manner in which I observe you completing your work leading up to the event, during the event, and post event. Your teammates and clients will complete surveys to help me fill in details and determine an appropriate grade.

10 Points: Final Reflection

Due by 10 a.m. the Monday following your event, please submit to ICON a 2-3 page reflection answering the following questions:

1. How did this project go from your perspective?
2. What tasks did you complete for your team?
3. What did you gain from the assignment?
4. What would you change about the assignment?
5. What would you change about your participation?
6. How would you improve the event if you could do it over again or without specific constraints?
7. What else would you like to share?
Day 1 Survey

Name:

Email:

Major:

Hometown:

Hobbies:

Circle your preferred team event:

Team 1: Fundraiser for Hospice Home of Johnson County on Saturday, May 9

Team 2: Celebration for SJMC graduates and their families on Friday, May 15

1) Is there any reason why you absolutely CAN NOT do either event?

2) Is there any reason why you would particularly love to do your top choice?

3) What special skills and areas of expertise do you bring to your team?