Instructor: Emily McMahon  
The University of Iowa  
School of Journalism & Mass Communication

Location: 27 MH  
Time: 5 - 6:15 PM Mondays & Wednesdays

Contact:  
emily-m-mcmahon@uiowa.edu  
*Email is the best and only way to reach me. Because I have many other work  
obligations, please give me 24 hours response time on the weekdays, and until end of day  
Monday if you email over the weekend. For emergencies & time sensitive issues, my cell  
phone number is listed on my website www.soireeia.com.

Office Hours: 6:15 PM - 7:15 PM Mondays, Wednesdays, & by appointment  
Office hours location will be in the classroom or at  
Sculpt 105 E College Street Iowa City, IA 52317

Course Overview: Gain hands-on experience in event planning specifically focusing on  
those events with guest lists that are private such as weddings, anniversaries, birthdays,  
bar/bat/b’nai mitzvahs, memorials, parties, and more. We will be working with clients,  
conceptualizing events, researching, lining up small and large details, carrying out events,  
and reflecting on outcomes. Meet with event planning professionals and complete  
individual and group projects.

Readings:  
There is no textbook for this course. Supplementary readings and resources will be posted  
to our course site.

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

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 are the basics:
● **Attendance & Participation:** Your presence, participation, and professionalism are essential to your success in this classroom and in the event planning field. Halfway through the semester you will submit a self-evaluation about your performance in these three areas worth up to 15 points. I also reserve the right to conduct unannounced attendance quizzes for up to 5 points each at any point during the semester. Quizzes will be based on relevant course topics. Missed attendance quizzes cannot be made up for any reason. (30+ points)

● **Topics Research Report & Presentation:** We are lucky enough to have some fabulous guest speakers talking about specific types of private events. In small groups, you’ll be assigned a specific topic that relates to one of our guest speakers’ expertise. The class prior to their visit, your research report is due and you’ll present your findings to the rest of the class in a dynamic presentation. (60 points)

● **Speaker preparation:** You will submit via ICON a bio and questions for each guest speaker by the start of the class period before their visit via ICON. (10 points each)

● **Floorplan / Room Layout:** As event planners, you’ll be required to conceptualize exactly how a room would be spaced for an event. Create a realistic and to-scale layout for an imaginary event using free online software. Submit a written report and the layout to ICON. (30 points)

● **Group Event Assignment:** 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 these elements.

  ○ **Event Proposal** - After meeting with your clients, you will individually write a proposal showcasing your own event ideas. Photos, descriptions, and explanations of each of the event elements will be described in this proposal. You’ll turn it in on ICON for grading as well as pitch to your clients. Based on their feedback, groups will move forward with the chosen event elements from the ideation stage and into full execution. (30 points)

  ○ **Individual Updates:** At multiple points throughout the semester, teams will present plans and updates to the class and/or client. 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)

  ○ **Event Execution:** Each student will contribute in a significant way to a class project to design and carry out a real-world private event. (50 points)

  ○ **Final Report:** You will submit to ICON a description of your assigned private event from your perspective including a SWOT analysis, an analysis of your teammates’ contributions and of your own performance. (50 points)
Events Review Presentation: Submit to ICON and present a presentation to class about your event. (20 points)

Grading (in percentages):

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Course Policies:

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 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.

Professionalism:
Professionalism is key in event planning and is key in building a positive relationship with your client. Students are expected to behave in a professional manner in the classroom and when representing the class in any way. This includes using proper email etiquette, arriving on time, being respectful and attentive, and more. I reserve the right to lower your final grade by up to 5 percent for each instance of unprofessional behavior. Examples of unprofessional behavior include misusing in-class work time, showing up for client presentations in unprofessional attire (like sweatpants), disrespectful communication with your client or teammates, arriving late or leaving class early without good cause, talking or using your electronics during class discussions, etc.

Late Work & Early Work
It’s essential that you meet deadlines with no exceptions. I will accept late work only in extreme circumstances. Please 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. Any unexcused late work will lose 10% per day and will not be accepted more than 5 days late.

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. 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.

**Workload & In-class work time**
The UI College of Liberal Arts guidelines state that each semester hour of class time should entail around two hours per week of outside homework and class preparation for the average student. For example, in our 3 semester hour course, students should expect (on average) 6 additional hours of outside work per week or a total of around 9 hours per course per week if classroom time is included.

Although spending time outside of class is expected and important, we will reserve time in class for working on your project and major assignments. Students are expected to make the most of this time and come prepared to be productive.

**Collaboration**
Like event planning in the professional world, a lot of what you’ll do in our class is collaborative. You will have a chance to describe your individual efforts as well as reflect on your teammates’ efforts throughout the semester. Each student should contribute an equal amount to group projects. Failure to do so will result in a lower grade. Misrepresenting your efforts and allowing others to do the work while you take credit is considered academic fraud and could be reported to CLAS. It is your responsibility to be in touch if you have any questions or concerns about collaboration.

**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 Academic Policies Handbook at http://clas.uiowa.edu/students/handbook.

**Electronic Communication**
University policy specifies that students are responsible for all official correspondences sent to their University of Iowa e-mail address (@uiowa.edu). Faculty and students should use this account for correspondences (Operations Manual, III.15.2, k.11).

**Accommodations for Disabilities**
The University of Iowa is committed to providing an educational experience that is
accessible to all students. A student may request academic accommodations for a disability (which include but are not limited to mental health, attention, learning, vision, and physical or health-related conditions). A student seeking academic accommodations should first register with Student Disability Services and then meet with the course instructor privately in the instructor's office to make particular arrangements. Reasonable accommodations are established through an interactive process between the student, instructor, and SDS. See http://sds.studentlife.uiowa.edu/ for information.

**Nondiscrimination in the Classroom**
The University of Iowa is committed to making the classroom a respectful and inclusive space for all people irrespective of their gender, sexual, racial, religious or other identities. Toward this goal, students are invited to optionally share their preferred names and pronouns with their instructors and classmates. Expressions of hate and bigotry directed at individuals or identities are not acceptable. For more information, contact the Office of Equal Opportunity and Diversity, diversity@uiowa.edu, or visit diversity.uiowa.edu.

**Academic Honesty**
All CLAS students or students taking classes offered by CLAS have, in essence, agreed to the College's Code of Academic Honesty: "I pledge to do my own academic work and to excel to the best of my abilities, upholding the IOWA Challenge. I promise not to lie about my academic work, to cheat, or to steal the words or ideas of others; nor will I help fellow students to violate the Code of Academic Honesty." Any student committing academic misconduct is reported to the College and placed on disciplinary probation or may be suspended or expelled (CLAS Academic Policies Handbook).

**CLAS Final Examination Policies**
The final examination schedule for each class is announced by the Registrar generally by the fifth week of classes. Final exams are offered only during the official final examination period. **No exams of any kind are allowed during the last week of classes.** All students should plan on being at the UI through the final examination period. Once the Registrar has announced the date, time, and location of each final exam, the complete schedule will be published on the Registrar's web site and will be shared with instructors and students. It is the student's responsibility to know the date, time, and place of a final exam.

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

**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 Office of the Sexual Misconduct Response Coordinator 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. For more information on Hawk Alert and the siren warning system, visit the Department of Public Safety website.

**Learning Goals:**

The following learning goals and objectives will be reinforced in this course.

1. **Law & Ethics Learning Goal**
   Understand and apply the principles and laws of freedom of speech and press in real space and cyberspace, and demonstrate an understanding of professional ethical principles and their historical development.

   **Learning Objective 3.** Students will demonstrate an ability to anticipate and recognize ethical issues when they arise and to reason through them taking multiple perspectives and contexts into account.

   **Learning Objective 4.** Students will demonstrate an ability to explain their ethical approaches and reasoning about a particular dilemma in terms that can be understood by a diverse group of people.

2. **Media Literacy Learning Goal**
   Understand the principles of media literacy and develop the skills necessary to access, analyze, evaluate, and create media messages across multiple media domains.

   **Learning Objective 2.** Students will develop critical thinking skills to analyze and interpret media messages through an understanding of media practices and institutions.

   **Learning Objective 3.** Students will learn how to create and disseminate media messages in various forms.

3. **Writing and Storytelling Learning Goal**
   Understand that clear, concise, correct writing is at the heart of journalistic expression and that reporting and communicating it effectively requires a knowledge and achievement of the highest, professionally-accepted standards in all work.

   **Learning Objective 2.** Students will display the ability to access and analyze data, report facts accurately, research and edit information responsibly and in a manner commensurate with professional standards.

   **Learning Objective 4.** Students will demonstrate the ability to apply above concepts in a manner that is sensitive to audiences across all media.
4. **Multiculturalism Learning Goal**  
To demonstrate an understanding of the diversity of groups (including communities defined by gender, race, ethnicity, age, religion and sexual orientation) in a global society in relationship to communications.

**Learning Objective 1:** Students will demonstrate an ability to produce media that serve the needs and interests of diverse communities and reflect their voices and experiences.

**Learning Objective 2:** Students will demonstrate sensitivity to and understanding of the cultures, histories, perspectives, and socio-economic and political situations of diverse groups.

**Learning Objective 3:** Students will demonstrate an ability to work with members of diverse groups to engage publicly over issues of community interest.

**Schedule:**

**Week 1**

Monday, August 21:  
- First day of class!  
- Course and classmate introductions  
- Major assignments overview

Wednesday, August 23:  
- Group Event Assignment Explained & Sign Up  
- Topics Research Report & Presentation Explained & Sign Up  
- Event Planning Basics Part I

**Week 2**

Monday, August 28:  
- 5:30 pm - **Clients Visit** for Event Explanations, Q & A, and Goal Setting  
- Initial Event Planning Brainstorming

Wednesday, August 30:  
- Event Planning Basics Part II
Week 3

Monday, September 4:
No Class - Labor Day

Wednesday, September 6:
Assignment Due: Speaker Preparation
Guest Speaker: Celeste Hutchinson & Sarah Clark of Zephyr Weddings

Week 4

Monday, September 11:
In-Class Work Day
Focus on your Special Events Proposals (individual work)
Research for Event Presentations (group work)

Wednesday, September 13:
Assignment Due: Speaker Preparation
Guest Speaker: Travis Newell and Riley Mullane with Unique Events

Week 5

Monday, September 18:
Review PPP Self Evaluations Assignment
Assignment Due: Present Event Proposal Drafts to class only for feedback

Wednesday, September 20:
Internship Fair in the AJB Rotunda from 4 pm - 5:30 pm

Week 6

Monday, September 25:
Assignment Due: (Revised) Event Proposal uploaded to ICON
5:30 pm - Meet with Clients and show them your event proposals
Wednesday, September 27:
Floorplan / Room Layout Assignment Explained
Frieda’s First Birthday Party Creative Jam
Office hours cancelled this day, please talk to me during class or make an appointment

Week 7

Monday, October 2:
LGBTQ Weddings Presentation

Wednesday, October 4:
Assignment Due: Speaker Preparation
Guest Speaker: Cicely Rocha-Miller ✅

owner of Life Design Events & MRSter, Modern Union Experts

Week 8

Monday, October 9:
Assignment Due: PPP Self Evaluation Due
Event Planning Certificate Wide Guest Speaker: Kevin Grothe
Location: AJB's Brownell Board Room

Tuesday, October 10 at 3:30 pm:
Event Planning Panel Discussion: Event Sponsorships
Location: TBD
Attendance is highly encouraged! If you cannot make the speaker panel event due to previously scheduled obligations like class, you are excused. However, 5 extra credit points are available to those who attend and write a short paragraph on what they learned. Due October 13 at 5 pm.

Wednesday, October 11:
NO CLASS. Please take this time to work on your events.

Week 9:
Monday, October 16:
   Assignment Due: Planned Event Written Update Paper
   Final Reflection Paper Assignment Explained
   **Clients Visit!**
   Final Check in with clients before Events take place

Wednesday, October 18:
   NO CLASS.
   I encourage you to attend the October 20th Event Planning Field Trip.
   Registration details to come.

Week 10

Monday, October 23:
   South Asian Weddings Student Presentation

Wednesday, October 25:
   Assignment Due: Speaker Preparation
   Guest Speaker: Nina Shah- Patel, KIS Events

Week 11

Monday, October 30:
   Memorials / Funerals Student Presentation

Wednesday, November 1:
   Assignment Due: Speaker Preparation
   Guest Speaker: Alex Lensing (confirmed) and Amanda Lensing (possible)

   Funeral Director at Lensing Funeral Homes

Week 12
Monday, November 6:
   Assignment Due: Planned Event Written Update Paper
   Bar / Bat / B’Nai Mitzvahs Student Presentation

Wednesday, November 8:
   Assignment Due: Speaker Preparation
   Guest Speaker: Howard Walstein

Total Entertainment Productions & KidsDance

Week 13

Monday, November 13:
   Assignment Due: Floorplans / Room Layout
   Room Layout Presentations to the class

Wednesday, November 15:

Week 14:

Thanksgiving Break - Happy Holidays and be safe!

Week 15

Monday, November 27:
   Quinceañeras Student Presentation

Wednesday, November 29:

Week 16

Monday, December 4:
   Events Review Presentations (2)
Wednesday, December 6:
   Events Review Presentations (1)
   Course Evaluations Survey

Week 17: FINALS WEEK. We will not meet in class nor will there be a final test/assignment.

{{Event planners have to be flexible. We may stray from this plan due to unforeseen opportunities or challenges. }}

Assignments:

   PPP Self Evaluations
   Due October 9
   15 points
   1 page

Your presence, participation, and professionalism are essential to your success in our classroom and essential to your success as an event planner.

Halfway through this semester, you will be asked to reflect on your performance in these three areas. Your reflection should be brief—one page should suffice—and include the number of points out of 15 you think you deserve for your efforts to date.

   Topics Research Report & Presentation
   Due (varies)
   In-Class Presentation (40 points) + Written Report (20 points)

At the start of the semester, we will divide into small groups who will work together to research these types of events and then prepare a presentation that we will review together during one class session.

This semester, these topics will be:
   - South Asian Weddings
   - LGBTQ Weddings
   - Funeral Services / Memorial / Celebration of Life Events
- Bar/Bat/B’nai Mitzvahs
- Quinceañeras

As a group, you’ll prepare a PowerPoint / Google Slides / Prezi that includes:

- Overview of event type.
- Specifics - what makes this event special?
- Traditions and History Explained
- Dos and Don'ts at this type of event related to event planning etiquette
- Pinterest board (minimum 250 pins). Show us your pins!
- Video clips from movies, tv shows, online sources relevant to your event.
- If you were designing an event like this - what are 15-20 things you’d have to incorporate? What are your event ideas?
- Your last slide(s) should professionally cite your sources used to complete all your research.

Your presentation should not use only websites as sources. I expect a minimum of 3 different mediums of resources such as books, interviews, magazines, encyclopedias, photos, film, tv, or radio. Additionally, expect your presentation to take the entire class period, so be sure the amount of content you’re presenting is robust enough to do so.

As individuals you’ll write a 2-3 page report discussing this research project. In at least one page, you will summarize your event topic. Additionally, please answer: What did you learn during your research? What is your favorite part of these types of events? How would you incorporate your research if you were planning this type of event? Due at the start of class on the day of your presentation.

### Speaker Preparation

**Due: Multiple**

**10 points each**

**1 page**

We are lucky to have some successful event planners and other professionals join us for in-depth conversations about their areas of expertise. 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.

Based on that research, please submit to ICON a 3+-paragraph summary of the speaker’s biography and pertinent details about their occupation/place of work along with at least 3 questions you’d like to ask the speakers.

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.
Speaker Preparations are **due by the start of the class period for the speaker’s visit.** Please see our weekly schedule for speaker dates and plan accordingly. These assignments are easy to work on and turn in ahead though since our speaker schedules are already on the syllabus.

**Speakers:**

- Celeste Hutchinson & Sarah Clark, Zephyr Weddings
- Travis Newell & Riley Mullane, Unique Events
- Cicely Rocha Miller, Life Design Events
- Nina Shah-Patel, KIS Events
- Alex Lensing, Lensing Funeral
- Howard Walstein, Total Entertainment Productions & KidsDance

**Extra Credit Opportunity:** We will need a volunteer to send a thank you note to each guest speaker. This person will receive 2 points of extra credit for composing and sending this note. Please BCC me so that I will receive a copy of the thank you. Each student may volunteer for this opportunity only once.

**Floorplan / Room Layout Assignment**

**Due November 13**

**30 Points**

Event planners are required to know what is happening at all times with their events. This includes planning the logistics and location of all items that are necessary to explain events. Make and turn in a diagram for a private event using a layout program such as AllSeated.

- Decide: What is your event? (wedding, party, etc.)
- Decide: How many people your event will be for?
- Decide: Where are you having this event?
- Find out the venue size and dimensions
- How many tables do you need?
- Are these the size of tables that are available at your venue?
- How many chairs?
- What other items do you need set up in the room for your event? Place those items in your space.

Expectations are that the layout will be to-scale, using the correct quantities & sizes of tables, and having an appropriately placed items (example: tables are not too close, etc.)

Write a paper that includes a description of your event, an inventory of what is in the space (with photos of what each item might look like) and an explanation of why those
items were chosen. Present in class to your classmates on what your diagram looks like and explain to us why you put objects where you did. Upload a PDF of your diagram and your paper to ICON.

Group Event Assignment
Due (varies)
170 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 on individual assignments. It is in your best interest to put forth your best effort and support your teammates.

Events:
- Baby Shower for Gina & Justin Whitty
- Harper’s 6th Birthday Party
- Surprise Retirement Party

Milestones and Points breakdown:

30 points: Event Proposal - Drafts Due September 18; Final Due September 25
After meeting with your clients, you will individually put together a proposal showcasing your own event ideas. Photos, written descriptions, and explanations of each of the event elements will be described in this proposal. Venue ideas, logistics considerations, creativity, event visions, etc. will be graded. You’ll turn it in on ICON for grading as well as pitch to your clients. Based on client feedback, groups will move forward with the chosen event elements from the ideation stage and into full execution. *This is an event proposal; however don’t let this assignment delay any planning progress that needs to happen for successful event execution.

Written Updates and In-Class Presentations - Due October 16 & November 6*
At two points throughout the semester teams will present plans and updates to their clients and 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, and the letter grade you’d give yourself for your efforts in this update period. (10 points
each = 20 points). While your grade is based on your written report, an unexcused absence on a client presentation day is an automatic 5-point deduction.

50 points: Event Execution
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 help me fill in details and determine an appropriate grade. To be successful, you must be an excellent teammate who is engaged and helpful throughout the semester.

50 Points: Final Reflection - Due within 72 hours of your event
Please submit to ICON a 4-5 page individually written reflection that includes or addresses:

1. A SWOT Analysis (Successes, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats)
2. How did this project go from your perspective?
3. What tasks did you complete for your team?
4. What did you gain from 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 grade would you give yourself in this project and why?
8. What grades would you give each of your teammates and why?
9. What else would you like to share?

20 Points: Events Review Presentation - Due December 4th
Graded as a group, you’ll present your make a presentation to tell us about your event. Share photos and stories with the class about the process. Please prepare slides and plan to reflect on on your event. How did everything go? What worked well? What didn’t work so well? What did you learn from all the time you spent planning & executing? What do you wish you could change? Do you have any lingering puzzles in relation to the event? Present to class as a group and team leaders will upload the presentation to ICON no later than December 4th at 5 pm. Everyone in your group will receive the same grade on this assignment.
Day 1 Survey

Name (and pronunciation):

Major:

Have you signed up to earn or are you planning to earn your Certificate in Event Planning?

Hometown:

Hobbies & special skills:

Do you have any event planning experience?

Is there anything else you’d like me to know about you?
Please rank these events in order of your preference with 1 being the team you’d most like to join:

- Baby Shower for Gina & Justin Whitty
- Harper’s 6th Birthday Party
- Surprise Retirement Party

1) Is there any reason why you absolutely CANNOT join any of these teams?

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?

4) Are you interested in being a team leader? What do you think would make you a good choice for this role?