

## Syllabus for “Communication and Community-Building”

Communication and Journalism Department COMM4970  
Spring semester 2003, Tuesdays and Thursdays, 2:00-3:15pm  
Instructor: Trish O’Kane, office in Tichenor 215, tel. 334-844-2853,  
[okanemp@auburn.edu](mailto:okanemp@auburn.edu)  
Office hours: TBA

### Course Description

On the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of *Brown v. Board of Education* this course looks at recent civil rights history at Auburn and gives students from diverse disciplines the chance to use creative communication skills to collect living history and package it. Students will learn by doing. They will collect undocumented stories from alumni and local leaders and these stories will be given to the university’s special Civil Rights archive when appropriate. During the first half of the semester students will do individual investigative and archival research using local media and university archives. During the second half of the semester students will work in small integrated teams (RTVF student, journalism, PR, comm.) Teams will share data collected and develop a joint proposal for a communication strategy: a video, brochure, street theater, art exhibit, poetry slam, etc.

The class will be dynamic and interactive, with several guest speakers and student participation. There is no set text, and readings will be drawn from a variety of sources. Documentary films will also be used. Students will explore the power of personal story telling and narrative, and how various types of media can be used as a vehicle. The group’s proposal will be presented to university authorities at the end of the semester in lieu of a final exam. Course work will involve extensive interviewing, video, oral history techniques and brainstorming on public relations strategies. Students will spend a considerable number of hours on research outside of class time, and are also required to keep a journal of their activities and reflections throughout the semester. A community journalism approach will be employed. The role of community journalism is “to comfort the afflicted and afflict the comfortable.”

### Course goals

1) Give students the opportunity to collect living history; 2) provide students with investigative research skills and experience in team work; and 3) use student talent and creativity to help the university with its diversity communication strategy.

### Instructor bio

Trish O’Kane worked as a journalist for 10 years in Central America and has published widely in English and Spanish on politics, economics and human rights. She is the author of a political guide to Guatemala. She also worked as an investigative reporter for the Southern Poverty Law Center and as a hate crimes researcher for the Center for Democratic Renewal.

#### I. Lecture and Reading Topics

- Why diversity is an issue at Auburn today
- The tools of a history detective-investigative techniques (library training session)
- General history of segregation in education from slavery to 1960s.
- Institutional racism and violence as form of social control-terrorism (lynching)

- Institutional resistance to desegregation, specific examples: Ole Miss and Alabama, Notasulga, Auburn and desegregation
- Communication strategy, different ways to tell stories, multi-layered histories.
- What we choose to remember (and who chooses): the politics of memory
- The importance of individual stories.

## **II. Class structure**

### **A. First half of semester:**

1. Individual research to prepare for team project. An instruction sheet with list of suggested topics will be handed out. Student must choose one specific topic, turn in this topic by Jan. 27, and use archives, local media, and interview locals to research the topic. Students must keep a journal of all research activities and reflections. Start journaling immediately. During the fifth week, instructor will hold individual conferences to check on research and journaling. Student must bring list of all sources consulted, the leads they are following up on and summarize their findings at this point Journals will also be checked during the second half of the semester. Findings will be turned in on March 9 as either an article or report. Findings will include a final recommendation on why a consulting team should use this research to develop communication materials for the university. All interviews must be turned in with findings.

2. Midterm on readings and lectures on February 26 will be take-home, open book (24 hours).

### **B. Second half of semester:**

1. Consulting teams work on their research/proposal and final presentation. Based on what you now know and what you have discovered in your individual research, you will participate in group evaluation discussions of the university's diversity communication strategy (evaluating the official film, book, discourse, etc.). Your consulting team specializes in diversity issues and communicating with young people. After evaluating the official strategy, your team will come up with an alternative proposal based on one of the student's individual research topics from the first half of the semester (the best proposals from the 1<sup>st</sup> half will be handed to the consulting teams to work on during the second half—these could be stories to be made into films, brochures, plays, etc.)

-Team will meet weekly: once in class and outside as needed. I will sit in on class meetings. Attendance will be taken and I will be taking notes for grading based on participation, creativity, teamwork and quality of research.

-Final product is an oral presentation to university authorities and a written proposal turned into instructor

-Same grade will be given to entire group.

## **III. Grades**

-Participation in class discussions and attendance	10%
-Individual research	30%
-Midterm	20%
-Team proposal (oral and written)	30%
-Journaling/Notebook	10%

#### IV. Policies

- A. Attendance: Class attendance is extremely important in this course. There is no set text and if you miss lectures and speakers you will have a very hard time completing the midterm and final project. More than five unexcused absences means your final grade will be lowered one full letter grade (i.e. from an “A” to a “B”, etc.) See Tiger Cub for policy on excused absences. Students must submit documentation of any excused absence within one week of the absence. Excuses submitted at the end of term for earlier in the semester will not be accepted. Students absent from class are responsible for all work missed. Please get the phone number of a student in the class and call them for missed work and lectures (buddy system).
- B. Plagiarism: In the real world, if you plagiarize or invent quotes and parts articles, you are fired and you have disgraced the media you work for as well as the university you attended. In the real classroom, if you plagiarize or invent work, I will prosecute you before university authorities and insure that you are expelled from my class and the department. You must properly attribute all quotes and information. Academic dishonesty is an offense that will be reported to the Academic Dishonesty Committee. According to the Auburn University Student Academic Honesty Code “Violations...[include] the submissions of themes, essays, term papers, design projects, these and dissertations, similar requirements or parts thereof that are not the work of the student submitting them...When direct quotations are used, they must be indicated, and when the ideas of another are incorporated into a paper, they must be appropriately acknowledged. Plagiarism is a violation. In starkest terms, plagiarism is stealing—using the words or ideas of another as if they were one’s own.
- C. Courtesy: Please be on time. It is rude to walk in late and interrupt once the lecture has begun. Turn off all cellphones before coming to class. No food in the classroom.

#### V. Calendar\*

Week 1	Jan. 13, 15		
Week 2	Jan. 20, 22	Library session	
Week 3	Jan. 27, 29	Turn in your research topic to instructor.	
Week 4	Feb. 3, 5	Speaker: Robert Anderson	
Week 5	Feb. 10, 12	Speaker: Dr. Martin Olliff	Conferences: research topics and journal check
Week 6	Feb. 17, 19	Conferences	
Week 7	Feb. 24, 26	Midterm Q & A session	Midterm (take home-no class)
Week 8	Mar. 2, 4		
Week 9	Mar. 9, 11	Individual Research Papers due	Consulting teams begin

		working.
Week 10	Mar. 16, 18	
Week 11	Mar. 23, 25	
Week 12	BREAK	
Week 13	Apr. 6, 8	Journal check.
Week 14	Apr. 13, 15	
Week 15	Apr. 20, 22	
Week 16	Apr. 27, 29	
Week 17	FINALS	
Week 18	FINALS	

\*Note: Deadlines for assignments are not flexible. More speakers will be scheduled.