

Public Relations Writing
JOUR 3421-001
Fall 2011
MW 11:30 – 1:30, 206 Meeman
Professor: Dr. Erin Willis
Office: 328 Meeman
Office hours: MW 10 – 11 or by appointment
Phone: (901) 678-2404
E-mail: enwillis@memphis.edu

COURSE-SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS

CATALOGUE/COURSE DESCRIPTION:

Emphasis on communication tactics; plan, write and produce public relations tools; audience and media selection; print and electronic media.

PROFESSIONAL VALUES AND COMPETENCIES FOR PUBLIC RELATIONS WRITING

Students will be able to:

- demonstrate an understanding of the diversity of people and cultures and of the significance and impact of mass communication in a global society;
- understand concepts and apply theories in the use and presentation of images in information;
- demonstrate an understanding of professional ethical principles and work ethically in pursuit of truth, accuracy, fairness and diversity;
- think critically, creatively and independently;
- conduct research and evaluate information by methods appropriate to the communication professions, audiences and the purposes they serve;
- clearly evaluate their own work and that of others for accuracy, fairness, clarity, appropriate style and grammatical correctness.

PREREQUISITES:

JOUR 2121, JOUR 3400

TEXTBOOKS:

The Associated Press Stylebook (2011). New York, NY: The Associated Press. ISBN 978-0-917360-54-1

Newsom, Doug. (2011). *Public Relations Writing: Form and Style*, 9th ed. Boston, MA: Wadsworth. ISBN 978-1-4390-8272-0

HOW PROFESSIONAL VALUES AND COMPETENCIES WILL BE MET:

Cognitive Objectives To Be Mastered (Ability To Explain, Analyze, Understand, Think Critically):

Students will:

- explain how the writer's purpose, intended public and requirements of the medium affect style and content;
- recognize potential problems and solutions in media relations;

- recognize legal and ethical problems associated with public relations writing;
- understand the differences between writing for print and writing for Mass/Social Media.

Performance Standards To Be Met (Demonstrable Skills, Abilities, Techniques, Applied Competencies):

Students will:

- earn a passing score on written exams;
- produce online media kits for clients. The kits may contain the following:
 - fact sheets, backgrounders, biographies;
 - brochures, memos, direct mail, PSAs, memos, letters to the editor;
 - website content, social media tools such as blogs, Twitter and YouTube content.
- apply AP guidelines to written materials;
- proofread and edit the work of others;
- pitch story ideas to news media; and
- respond to crisis communication situations.

HOW ASSESSMENT OF STUDENT LEARNING WILL BE MET FOR PR WRITING:

This class is designed to equip students with the skills needed to write correctly in controlled, mass and social media outlets for various audiences. Students work with clients to design messages and tools that solve the clients' communication problem.

Students will:

- use resources to target appropriate media outlets;
- produce strategic components of online media kits;
- use AP guidelines on written materials;
- proofread and edit the work of others;
- manage timelines/deadlines; and
- respond appropriately to a crisis communication situation using techniques and media

CLASSROOM FORMAT:

The classroom will be presented in lecture and laboratory format. There is also opportunity for group work on several assignments. Students write and submit assignments that are returned with feedback that is meant to encourage improvement. Students should adhere to deadlines and follow the format below for submitting written work.

WRITTEN WORK

Typewritten work is expected unless the assignment states otherwise. In this class, most assignments will be produced for a real world client.

With that frame of reference, students should include a memo with each assignment that they submit. The memo should feature:

- the student's name
- the date

- specific instructions (SEE BELOW) about the goal that you hoped to achieve with the communication piece that will help your supervisor provide solid feedback about how successful you were with the assignment

Unless given specific instructions otherwise, students should complete a memo for every assignment that they submit. The memo should be stapled to the FRONT of each assignment.

The memo should address the following specific instructions/questions:

The student should provide a review of the assignment. What was the student's approach? The student should include the following:

- PURPOSE:** What did the student hope to achieve with the piece? Why did the student do what he or she did?
- AUDIENCE:** Who is/are the audience(s) for the assignment? Describe demographics. Are there any special circumstances in this population?
- MEDIA:** How is the student planning on delivering the message to the audience? Mail? Fax? Email? Social media? To whom (by name and title)? At which media? **Be specific.** Why were those media channels selected?
- RESPONSE:** What response is expected from the audience? Why?
- DEADLINE:** Is there a time constraint regarding when the message needs to reach the audience? Why? Is it a restraint that the student or the organization has imposed?
- ASSUMPTIONS:** Did you have all of the information you needed in order to execute the assignment? If you had to assume some facts about the audience or the client, what were they?

DEADLINES:

Understanding and working with deadlines is a critical part of the public relations process. **Assignments are due at the start of class on date assigned.** No late assignments will be accepted.

GRADING:

Testing and Assignment Procedures: Course work will be accomplished every week. There will be 10 writing assignments, two tests and a final project. Each must be completed by its due date and time (Central Standard Time), which varies by assignment and test. Check each due time to ensure that you post by the deadline.

Other parts of your grade will come from participating in class discussions.

Your success in this course will depend on your willingness to read the textual and supplemental learning materials, successfully complete tests and written assignments, and participate in discussion activities, as assigned.

Written assignments will be graded on the basis of AP style, grammar, spelling and punctuation, as well as content.

Grading Scale on Written Assignments

A 91 – 100	Professional work. Clear thinking reflected in clear writing. Uses appropriate style for type media. Knows and uses preferred form. No errors in form, grammar or spelling. Adapted to intended audience (public).
B 81– 90.99	Near professional work. Lacks polish (style) of A work. Form is correct. No errors in form, grammar or spelling. Adapted to intended audience.
C 71 – 80.99	Acceptable as a classroom assignment only. Not usable professionally without further editing/corrections. Up to 7 errors detected. [or] Not well adapted to intended audience or medium.
D 65 – 70.99	Needs significant work in form and/or style. Up to 12 errors detected. [or] Little consideration of needs/interests of intended audience or of medium.
F 64.99 and below	Unacceptable in form and style [or] fails to adapt to audience or medium.

GRADING FOR SEMESTER

The student’s final grade will be calculated using the following categories:

10 writing assignments	100 points each
Two tests	100 points each
Class participation	100 points
Final project	200 points
TOTAL	1500 points

A= 1350 – 1500 points

B= 1200 – 1349 points

C= 1050 – 1199 points

D= 900 – 1049 points

F= 899 and below

TENTATIVE TIMETABLE:

ASSIGNMENT DEADLINES:

Aug. 31	Personal biography
Sept. 7	Written assignment #1 - Publics
Sept. 14	Written assignment #2 - Ethics
Sept. 21	Written assignment #3 – Topic research
Sept. 28	Written assignment #4 – News release
Oct. 5	Written assignment #5 – Social media

Oct. 12	Written assignment #6 – Media kit
Oct. 19	Exam 1
Nov. 2	Written assignment #7 – Positioning
Nov. 9	Written assignment #8 – Fundraising letter
Nov. 16	Written assignment #9 - Newsletter
Nov. 23	Written assignment #10 - Speech
Dec. 7	Exam 2
Dec. 9	Final project due

ASSIGNED READINGS

Here are the assigned readings from your textbook, *Public Relations Writing: Form & Style*. We will be using many other supplemental materials as well.

Aug. 29, 31	Ch.1: Public Relations and the Writer Ch.3: Persuasion
Sept. 7	Ch. 2: Ethical and Legal Responsibilities Power Point 2 PRSA Code of Ethics AP Briefing on Media Law (pgs. 382-424)
Sept.12, 14	Ch. 4: Research Ch. 5: PR Planning Process
Sept. 19, 21	Ch. 6: Writing to Clarify Ch. 7: Grammar, Spelling Ch. 8: Writing for Social Media AP Stylebook: Punctuation (pgs. 370-381), editing marks (pg.425) and skim listings
Sept. 26, 28	Blogging, Social Media
Oct. 3, 5	Ch. 9: Media Kits, Pitches, Backgrounders and Position Papers
Oct. 10, 12	Ch. 11: Email, Memos and Letters Ch. 12: Reports and Proposals Ch. 13: Writing Ad Copy
Oct. 15-18	Fall Break
Oct. 19	Exam # 1
Oct. 24, 26	Ch. 14: Newsletters Ch. 15: Brochures Ch. 16: Magazines
Oct. 31, Nov. 2	Writing for the Web
Nov. 7, 9	Ch. 17: Speeches and Presentations
Nov. 14, 16	Employee Relations, Corporate Social Responsibility
Nov. 21, 23	Ch. 18: Crisis Communication
Nov. 24-27	Thanksgiving break
Nov. 28, 30	Crisis Communication (continued)
Dec. 5, 7	Exam 2

DEPARTMENT POLICIES

EMAIL:

You must have your UM email account activated. If you are using another provider such as Google, you are required to have your UM email forwarded to that account. Go to the <http://iam.memphis.edu> website to implement forwarding of UM email. You are required to check your email daily. You are responsible for complying with any email sent to you by your professor or the University.

CELLPHONES:

You must turn them off during class.

ATTENDANCE:

Class attendance is **mandatory** in the Department of Journalism. You may be assigned a failing grade for the semester for nonattendance, or habitual late arrival. No late work will be accepted without prior arrangements, which are acceptable to your professor. Students may not be permitted to make up any missing work unless it is for an absence due to illness or other catastrophic emergency such as a death in the family that can be documented (e.g. with a doctor's note or a copy of the newspaper obituary). This is a professional program for journalists who are expected to understand and comply with deadlines. If you have some problem making it to class on time make arrangements to fix the problem or consider taking another class. You should consider this class your "job" in the educational process and be on time just as you would elsewhere.

CHEATING:

In addition to university-wide policies stated in the Code of Student Rights and Responsibilities, the Department of Journalism considers making up quotes from sources, turning in substantially the same assignment for credit in two different courses, or a student receiving any assistance from others for work assigned to be done on his/her own, as acts of cheating punishable to the degree determined appropriate by the course instructor and department chair. That may include grade reductions or seeking dismissal of the student from the university.

"Your written work may be submitted to Turnitin.com, or a similar electronic detection method, for an evaluation of the originality of your ideas and proper use and attribution of sources. As part of this process, you may be required to submit electronic as well as hard copies of your written work, or be given other instructions to follow. By taking this course, you agree that all assignments may undergo this review process and that the assignment may be included as a source document in Turnitin.com's restricted access database solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism in such documents. Any assignment not submitted according to the procedures given by the instructor may be penalized or may not be accepted at all." (Office of Legal Counsel, October 17, 2005)

DISABILITY:

Any student who feels s/he may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact the Office for Disability Services at (901) 678-2880 in 110 Wilder Tower Hall to coordinate reasonable accommodations for students with documented disabilities.

ONLINE SETEs:

You are urged to complete the SETEs evaluation of this Once your instructor has posted

your grade, you can immediately see that grade, provided you completed a teacher evaluation for that class. How to access your evaluation forms: Log in using your UUID and email password; click on the gray “Student” tab; complete an evaluation for each course listed and hit the “Submit” button at the bottom of the form. It will only take a few minutes of your time. We take the evaluations very seriously and use them to improve courses and instructional quality. Your feedback is essential and will be appreciated.

EXIT EXAM FOR ALL JOURNALISM MAJORS:

All Journalism majors are required to take the Journalism Exit Exam their last semester before graduation. Please contact the Journalism office staff anytime during the semester to sign up. You may take the test anytime there are open lab hours during the semester. You will not be certified to graduate until you have completed the test.

PROFESSIONAL VALUES AND COMPETENCIES FOR JOURNALISM PROGRAM:

The Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communication requires that, irrespective of their particular specialization, all graduates should be aware of certain core values and competencies and be to

- understand and apply the principles and laws of freedom of speech and press, for the country in which the institution that invites ACEJMC is located, as well as receive instruction in and understand the range of systems of freedom of expression around the world, including the right to dissent, to monitor and criticize power, and to assemble and petition for redress of grievances;
- demonstrate an understanding of the history and role of professionals and institutions in shaping communications;
- demonstrate an understanding of gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation and, as appropriate, other forms of diversity in domestic society in relation to mass communications.
- demonstrate an understanding of the diversity of peoples and cultures and of the significance and impact of mass communications in a global society.
- understand concepts and apply theories in the use and presentation of images and information;
- demonstrate an understanding of professional ethical principles and work ethically in pursuit of truth, accuracy, fairness and diversity;
- think critically, creatively and independently;
- conduct research and evaluate information by methods appropriate to the communications professions in which they work;
- write correctly and clearly in forms and styles appropriate for the communications professions, audiences and purposes they serve;
- critically evaluate their own work and that of others for accuracy and fairness, clarity, appropriate style and grammatical correctness;
- apply basic numerical and statistical concepts;
- apply tools and technologies appropriate for the communications professions in which they work.

ASSESSMENT OF STUDENT LEARNING FOR JOURNALISM PROGRAM:

The Council seeks to promote student learning and encourages experimentation and innovation.

Assessment is a system of evaluation of student learning at the course or unit level (as opposed to grading at the individual level). Three criteria should guide assessment of student learning:

- Awareness: familiarity with specific information, including facts, concepts, theories, laws and regulations, processes and effects.
- Understanding: assimilation and comprehension of information, concepts, theories and ideas.
- Application: competence in relating and applying skills, information, concepts, theories and ideas to the accomplishment of tasks.