

Public Relations Writing

JOUR 3421-001

Spring 2011

Monday & Wednesday; 9 a.m. – 11 a.m.

MJ 206

Prof. B. White

Office: Meeman 330

Office Hours Monday –Thursday 1:00 p.m. - 2 p.m.; also available by appointment

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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. Two lecture hours, two laboratory hours per week.

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:

JOUR2121, JOUR 3400

TEXTBOOKS:

The Associated Press Stylebook (2010). New York, NY: The Associated Press. ISBN 978-0-917360-54-1

Smith, Ronald D. (2008). *Becoming a Public Relations Writer: A Writing Process Workbook for the Profession*, 3rd ed. New York, NY: Routledge. ISBN 978-0-058-6301-7

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 media kits for clients. The kits may contain:
 - brochures, memos, direct mail, PSAs, memos, letters to the editor and other tools.
 - website content and design, social media tools such as blogs, Twitter and YouTube content.
- apply AP guidelines to written materials;
- proofread and edit the work of others;
- develop and update a blog about the field or client at least once per week.

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:

Application:

- use resources to target appropriate media outlets;
- produce information kits for clients;
- use AP guidelines on written materials
- proofread and edit the work of others
- work in a group setting to produce an information kit
- manage timelines/deadlines
- produce an individual information kit

CLASSROOM FORMAT:

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

WRITTEN WORK

Unless otherwise directed, please turn in all work in a file folder.

Typewritten work is expected unless the assignment states otherwise (e.g., editing assignment). In this class, most assignments will be produced for a client. The professor serves not just as the instructor, but also as the supervisor/director of the project.

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 supervisor's (Professor'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 attached firmly to the FRONT of the folder with a large paper clip, a small binder clip or two small paper clips. It should *never be stapled*.

The memo should address the following specific instructions/questions for the professor/supervisor:

1. The student should instruct the professor on how to approach the assignment. Is the professor supposed to read it? Review it?
2. The student should provide a review of the assignment. What was the student's approach? The student should include the following:
 - a. **PURPOSE:** What did the student hope to achieve with the piece? Why did the student do what he or she did?
 - b. **AUDIENCE:** Who is/are the audience(s) for the assignment? Describe demographics. Are there any special circumstances in this population?
 - c. **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?
 - d. **RESPONSE:** What response is expected from the audience? Why?
 - e. **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?
 - f. **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?

3. **Sign and date memo.** Students should clip the completed memo on the front of the folder. The assignment should go *inside the folder* – on the **RIGHT** side of the folder. Again, students should use a large paper clip, two small paper clips or one a small binder clip. Students *should not staple their papers to their folders*.

RE-Dos/REWRITES

Correcting and re-submitting edited (marked up) work is encouraged and is a good way to improve grades, if needed. **In most cases, one redo is allowed per assignment; however, exceptions may be made.** When submitting rewrites, students should adhere to the following guidelines:

- Unless arrangements have been made with the Professor, submit the rewrite to the Professor by the next class period.
- Write a new memo that explains the variations made to the new submission.
- Include the original assignment and original memo along with the rewrite in a folder.

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.** If you miss class and want to turn in late work – *and you have made prior arrangements with the professor* – you may be allowed to submit the assignment on the day you return.

It is okay to make mistakes, but repeated mistakes, habitual absences, tardiness and late work are not rewarded. The majority of the writing in this class is produced for a client and builds toward a mid-term or final project, so missing class has a negative impact on the each student's overall grade.

GRADING:

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

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|---|---|
| 1. WRITING ASSIGNMENTS: | 30 percent |
| The sum of your grades in each the following categories | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ news releases, articles for newsletters, bios, feature stories, other▪ writing for the Web, other nontraditional media, fact sheets▪ presentation writing, brochure copy▪ special and in-class assignments | |
| 3. TWO TESTS covering text and lectures (15 percent each) | 25 percent |
| 4. MID TERM – MEDIA KIT | 15 percent |
| 6. WEBLOG & QUIZZES | 15 percent |
| 7. FINAL PROJECT MEDIA KIT | 15 percent |
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| 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. |

WEEK MATERIAL	TOPIC	SUPPORTING
1	Preparing to Write Overview, Introductions, PR Process	Handout
2	Writing: Informing and persuading The Writing Process/Interviews Public Relations Point of View for Semester: Blogging Select off-campus editor/reporter/news director to interview Lab familiarization.	Chap. 1 (Smith) Chap. 4 (Smith)
2	News and public relations Theories of Public Communication Reports from media interviews Information Kits	Chap. 3 (Smith) Chap. 5 (Smith) AP style, Stylebook Chap. 16 (Smith)
3	News releases News release #1 Working with the media	Chap. 6 (Smith)
4	Photo captions Media Advisory/Media Alert News release #2	Chap. 7 (Smith) Chap. 7 (Smith)
5	PR, Media & New Media	Handout
6	TEST #1	
6	Broadcast News Releases: soundbytes & actualities	Chap. 8 (Smith) Handout
7	Bios. Fact sheets/backgrounders/FAQs.	Chap. 9 (Smith)
8	Bios. Fact sheets/backgrounders/FAQs. FIRST MEDIA KIT DUE	
9	Brochures, Flyers, Newsletters, Annual Reports	Chap. 11 (Smith)
10	Brochures, Flyers, Newsletters, Annual Reports	Chap. 11 (Smith)
11	Writing for the web	Chap. 11 (Smith)
12	Writing for the web	

TEST # 2

13	Corporate ads, direct mail	
14	Presentations Corporate ads, direct mail	Chap. 13, 14
(Smith)		
15	Statements/Q&A Legal and ethical guidelines Measurement and Evaluation Speeches & Interviews Media Events	tbd handout handout Chap. 15 (Smith) handout
16	Final Exam: Final Media Kit Due	

Class participation activities include all exercises and special projects. Presume all assignments will be turned in typed in the appropriate format. *All exercises, assignments and dates are subject to change.*

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 me privately to discuss your specific needs. Please 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.