

## **Public Relations Writing**

JOUR3421-001

Fall 2012

Monday, Wednesday – 11:30 a.m. – 1:30 p.m., #206 Meeman Journalism

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### **COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

#### **CATALOGUE/COURSE DESCRIPTION:**

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

#### **PREREQUISITES:**

JOUR 2121, JOUR 3400

#### **TEXTBOOKS:**

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

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

#### **CLASSROOM FORMAT:**

Class will be both lectures and lab-style activities. Be on time to class, and plan to attend the entire class period. We will do in-class assignments that are important to your grade. The in-class lab allows you the opportunity to ask for feedback and improve your writing. No matter what job you find after college, you will always be called upon to write. This class is designed to expose you to public relations writing and the collateral materials commonly used in the field.

#### **MEDIA DIET:**

As you know, the very nature of our profession requires us to stay on top of today's happenings. Our responsibility is to assess their relevance to – and their implications for – our clients and employers. Knowledge of current events, government, history and media is becoming more and more crucial. While your undergraduate education will provide a strong base of understanding in these areas, your proactive efforts to continue learning about them will greatly benefit your career.

In this course, one cannot learn about writing and how to improve writing skills without reading topical news and feature writing, or watching and listening to quality news broadcasts (no, not E! News!). Continue to feed your media diet with a good mix of traditional, specialized and Internet news sources.

Some assignments will require looking up articles and other resources online, such as [www.commercialappeal.com](http://www.commercialappeal.com) and [www.mediabistro.com](http://www.mediabistro.com) (registration is free). Press release wire and distribution services offer full-text news announcements from all types of organizations.

- [www.blackprwire.com](http://www.blackprwire.com)
- [www.hispanicprwire.com](http://www.hispanicprwire.com)
- [www.home.businesswire.com](http://www.home.businesswire.com)
- [www.marketwire.com](http://www.marketwire.com)
- [www.primezone.com](http://www.primezone.com)
- [www.prnewswire.com](http://www.prnewswire.com)
- [www.prweb.com](http://www.prweb.com)

Also check our class Weebly site for suggestions on PR blogs to follow.

#### **DEADLINES:**

Understanding and working with deadlines is a critical part of the public relations process. **No late assignments will be accepted.** All assignments must be uploaded to the appropriate eCourseware DropBox by the assigned deadline.

#### **GRADING:**

Course work will be accomplished every week. There will be writing assignments, quizzes, and a final project. Each must be completed by its due date and time, which varies by assignment. Other parts of your grade will come from participating in class discussions and of course, class attendance. Written assignments will be graded on the basis of AP style, grammar, spelling and punctuation, as well as content.

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

#### **Grading Scale for Written Assignments**

##### **A**

90 – 100 Professional work.

Clear thinking reflected in clear writing.

Uses appropriate style for type of media. Knows and uses preferred form. **No errors in form, grammar or spelling.** Adapted to intended audience (public).

##### **B**

89– 80 Near professional work. Lacks polish (style) of A work.

Form is correct. **No errors in form, grammar or spelling.**

Adapted to intended audience.

##### **C**

79 – 70 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**

69 – 60 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**

50 and below Unacceptable in form and style [or] fails to adapt to audience or medium.

**GRADING FOR SEMESTER**

<b>Writing assignments:</b> media contacts list, news release, speech (+50 for delivery), newsletter/brochure, social media release, media pitch	100 points each
<b>Laboratory assignments:</b> obituary, ethics case study, client research, lead writing, boilerplate, business letter, media advisory, PSA, infographic	50 points each
<b>Blog assignments</b> (20 total)	25 points each
<b>Foursquare</b>	50 points
<b>Twitter</b>	50 points
<b>Resume presentation</b>	150 points
<b>Quizzes</b> (5 total)	20 points each
<b>Final project</b>	300 points
<b>TOTAL</b>	2250 points

**ASSESSMENT**

**PROFESSIONAL VALUES AND COMPETENCIES FOR PR 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.

**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:
  - o fact sheets, backgrounders, biographies;
  - o brochures, memos, direct mail, PSAs, memos, letters to the editor;
  - o 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;
- 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(s).

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

**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.

#### **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 should check your email regularly, as I may communicate with you outside of class. You are responsible for complying with any email sent to you by your professor or the university.

In addition to email, we will use eCourseware this semester. I will post additional readings, assignments, and other course communication on eCourseware, so check this site frequently as well.

##### **CELLPHONES:**

No cellphones are permitted in class. You will be asked to leave if your cellphone is used during class. Be respectful and make professional choices.

##### **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. 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.

You have **three** excused absences to use at your discretion. After the third absence, your grade

will drop half of a letter grade for each additional absence. Use your absences wisely. I don't care if you want to skip class to get your hair done or go hang out with your friends, but if later something serious happens (even a job interview!) and you have no "free" absences left – too bad. Your grade will suffer.

**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 course. 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.