

**Public Relations Writing**

JOUR 3421-M50

Fall 2012

Online

Kimberly Helminski Keller, M.A.

Office: Online

Office Hours: By appointment

Phone/Cell contact: 469-277-6157

Email contact: khelmnsk@elearnmail.memphis.edu or kimberly.keller@memphis.edu

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS****CATALOGUE/COURSE DESCRIPTION:**

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

**PREREQUISITE:**

JOUR 2121, JOUR 3400

**TEXTBOOKS:**

The Associated Press Stylebook (2011). New York, NY: The Associated Press.

ISBN 0465021875

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

**CLASSROOM FORMAT:**

This course is delivered online in an asynchronous format. You must have Internet access and Microsoft Word or other word processing software that generates a “.doc” or “.docx” extension.

**Browser:** To view lesson slideshows, you must be running Internet Explorer 5 or higher. To determine what browser version you have, select from the browser menu Help > About. To download the file, click on your computer’s platform system: PC or Mac. The download may take an hour or more, so plan to do it at a convenient time.

You will view the lesson slideshows from the Desire2Learn course. These PowerPoint slides represent supplemental information that you can use and reference in your work. As a way of referencing in your work, note the chapter, subject and slide number.

You must have Microsoft Word software. I must be able to open your work to grade it. Work submitted in a software package not noted as acceptable in this syllabus (Microsoft Word) may result in point deductions being assessed to your work.

**COURSE WEB SITE ADDRESS:**

(The course page will be open from August 25, 2012 to December 9, 2012.)

Go to the University of Memphis home page: <http://www.memphis.edu>

1. Click on the “MyMemphis” link at the bottom of the left column menu.
2. Log in using your University of Memphis username and password.
3. Click on the “eCampus Resources” tab.

4. In the center column of the page, click on the blue UoM eCourseware link.
5. Down on that page, in the Fall 2012 course list available to you, click on the link for JOUR 3421 - M50 to enter your course and read the instructions on the welcoming page.

**GRADING: Testing and Assignment Procedures:** Course work will be accomplished every week. There will be 12 writing assignments, one quiz, two tests and discussion board participation. 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.

The tests will consist of true/false and multiple-choice questions, which will contain one or more units of study. Tests will be limited as to time. The computer will cut you off at the end of the prescribed time period, regardless of whether you have completed all questions. You may use your text to confirm an answer, but be aware that time limits will not allow you to spend much time flipping through the text. You should read and be familiar with each section before taking its test.

These assignments and discussions must be submitted per instructions; no credit will be given outside of the proper submission guidelines.

Your success in this online 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 scheduled.

You are required to ask via e-mail or call me with your questions as to the proper completion of the assignment. **It is your responsibility to ensure clarification of instructions.** Written assignments will be graded on the basis of AP style, grammar, spelling and punctuation, as well as content.

### **SUBMITTING FORMAT OF WRITTEN WORK**

All assignments must be uploaded to the course Dropbox. (Discussion Board topics can be written directly in the Discussion Board interface.) 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 several of the assignments they submit. The memo will be the first page of your assignment and should feature:

- the student's name
- the supervisor's (instructor'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

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

1. The student should tell the instructor what she is to do with the assignment. Is the instructor 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:

- **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 and/or psychographics. 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?

### LATE WORK

The instructor will accept only one late written assignment from the student, and **the instructor must be notified that the assignment will be late before the deadline.** Notifications that are received after the deadline will not be honored, and the project will be graded as a 0. Late assignments (with proper notification) automatically lose 10 points and must be submitted within seven days of the original deadline. The tests, quizzes and final project must be completed on time and will not be accepted after the deadline.

### 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 more than two 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 seven 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:

### Written Assignments **1,300**

- Identifying publics 100
- Writing news leads 50
- Research 100
- News release and pitch 125
- Blog 100
- Position paper 100
- PSA script 100
- Fundraising letter 100
- Newsletter content 125
- Speech 100
- Job packet 100
- Crisis communications 200

### Quizzes and Exams **250**

- AP and Grammar Quiz 50
- Exam 1 100
- Exam 2 100

### Discussion Board **100**

- Topic 1: Introductions and interaction 10
- Topic 2: Ethics 30
- Topic 3: Paying for placement 30
- Topic 4: Emotional appeals 30

**Total points possible: 1,650**

- A= 1,650 – 1,501.5
- B= 1,501.4 – 1,336.5
- C= 1,336.4 – 1,171.5
- D= 1,171.4- 1,072.5
- F= 1,072.4 and below

## TENTATIVE TIMETABLE:

Here are the due dates and assignments for the class. Most due dates fall on Sundays; however, due dates, assignments and readings are subject to change.

Most of your assigned readings are from your textbook. We will be using many other supplemental materials as well. You are also responsible for reading the weekly Power Point presentations and any posted PDFs or links. See the Course Content section of the class website.

Dates and	Modules	Readings	Work to be Completed
Aug. 25 – Sept. 2	Module 1: Getting Started	Syllabus  Case scenario	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Textbook is needed Aug. 25</li> <li>• Extra credit quiz is due Sept. 2</li> </ul>

		How to do cover memo	
	Module 2: Review of concepts from Intro to PR	Chapter 1: PR and the Writer  Chapter 2: Law and Ethics  Chapter 3: Persuasion  AP Briefing on Media Law (pg. 382-424)  PowerPoint on PR review  Other files in module	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discussion 1: Introduction is due Sept. 2</li> <li>• Assignment 1: Identifying publics is due Sept. 2</li> </ul>
Sept. 3 – 9	Module 3: Review of concepts from Media Writing	Chapter 6: Writing to Clarify  Chapter 7: Grammar, Spelling  AP Stylebook: Punctuation and editing marks  Power Point on basic writing  Writing worksheets  Other files in module	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assignment 2: Writing a news lead is due Sept. 9</li> <li>• Discussion 2: Ethical behavior in PR (original comments) is due Sept. 9</li> <li>• AP quiz is due Sept. 9</li> </ul>
Sept. 10-16	Module 4: PR research and planning	Chapter 4: Research  Chapter 5: Planning PowerPoint on research and planning  Easy guide to PR planning  Other files in module	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assignment 3: Research material hunt is due Sept. 16</li> <li>• Discussion 2: Ethical behavior in PR (comments to others) is due Sept. 16</li> </ul>
Sept. 17-23	Module 5: Media Relations, Media Releases and Pitching	Chapter 8: Writing for Social Media  Chapter 9: Pitching (pg. 195-197 only) PowerPoint on media relations, media releases and pitches  How to format a press release	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assignment 4: News release and pitches by phone and email are due Sept. 23</li> </ul>

		Tips for pitching  Other files in module	
Sept. 24 – 30	Module 6: Social Media and Websites	No textbook material  PowerPoint on social media  PowerPoint on writing for the Web  Other files in module	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assignment 5: Blog is due Sept. 30</li> <li>• Discussion 3: Pay for placement (original comments) is due Sept. 30</li> </ul>
Oct. 1-7	Module 7: Media Kits, Backgrounders and Position Papers	Ch. 9 : Media Kits, Media Pitches, Backgrounders and Position Papers  PowerPoint on media kits, backgrounders and position papers  Other files in module	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assignment 6: Position paper is due Oct. 7</li> <li>• Assessment: Exam 1 is due Oct. 7</li> </ul>
Oct. 8-21 ( <i>Fall Break is Oct. 13-16</i> )	Module 8: Emails, Letters, Memos, Reports, Proposals and Ad Copy	Ch. 11: Emails, letters and memos  Chapter 12: Reports and proposals  Chapter 13: Writing Ad Copy  PowerPoint on emails, letters, memos, reports and proposals  PowerPoint on ad copy  Other files in module	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assignment 7: Public service announcement (PSA) is due Oct. 21</li> <li>• Discussion 3: Pay for placement (comments to others) is due Oct. 21</li> </ul>
Oct. 22- Nov. 4	Module 9: Newsletters, Brochures and Magazines	Chapter 14: Newsletters  Chapter 15: Brochures  Chapter 16: Magazines  PowerPoint on newsletters, brochures and magazines  Other files in module	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assignment 8: Fundraising letters are due Oct. 28</li> <li>• Assignment 9: Newsletter content is due Nov. 4. (<i>This is a time intensive project.</i>)</li> </ul>
Nov. 5-11	Module 10:	Chapter 17: Speeches and	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assignment 10:</li> </ul>

	Speeches and Presentations	Presentations PowerPoint on speeches and presentations Other files in module	Speech is due Nov. 11  • Discussion 4: Using emotional appeals (original comments) is due Nov. 11
Nov. 12-18	Module 11: PR Employment Tools	No text reading PowerPoint on job preparation, freelancing, etc. Other files in module	• Assignment 11: Job packet is due Nov. 18  • Discussion 4: Using emotional appeals (comments to others) is due Nov. 18
Nov. 19- Dec. 2 (Thanksgiving break is Nov. 22-25)	Module 12: Crisis Communication	Chapter 18: Crisis Communications PowerPoint on crisis communications Other files in module	• Assignment 12: Crisis scenario is due Dec. 2. <i>(This is a time intensive project.)</i>
Dec. 3 -9		None	• Assessment: Exam 2 due by Dec. 9

Deadlines and content are subject to change.

## ASSESSMENT

### 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.

#### 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 and quizzes;
- earn a passing score on written media products such as news releases, media pitches, position papers, fundraising letters, speeches, social media tools and others;
- apply AP guidelines to written materials;
- proofread and edit your own work;
- meaningfully participate in class Discussion Board topics

**HOW ASSESSMENT OF STUDENT LEARNING WILL BE MET FOR PUBLIC RELATIONS 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 will:

Application:

- use resources to target appropriate media outlets;
- use AP guidelines on written materials;
- proofread and edit your own work;
- manage timelines/deadlines;
- respond appropriately to a crisis communication situation using PR writing tools and media outreach.

**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 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)

**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.

**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.

**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.