

Public Relations Writing

JOUR 3421-501

Fall 2017

MW 12:40-2:05 p.m.

Varnell-Jones 205

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COURSE REQUIREMENTS**CATALOG 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. ISBN978-0-917360-54-1
- Newsom, Doug. (2011). Public Relations Writing: Form and Style, 9th ed. Boston, MA: Wadsworth. ISBN 978-1-4390-8272-0

CLASSROOM FORMAT:

The class will be presented in lecture and discussion format. It is a hybrid class, meaning work will be accomplished inside the classroom in a traditional format, and outside the classroom using various digital platforms. Students write and submit assignments that are returned with feedback that is meant to encourage improvement.

COURSE WEBSITE ADDRESS:

1. Go to the University of Memphis home page: <http://www.memphis.edu>
2. Click on the "MyMemphis" link at the bottom of the left column menu
3. Log in using your University of Memphis username and password.
4. Click on the "eCampus resources" tab.
5. In the center column of the page, click on the blue U of M eCourseware link.

NOTE: You must use your UM email when corresponding with your professor. Email is the most efficient way communicate with your professor when outside of class. We will NOT use the internal eCourseware email system on the course web page. Use your regular UoM email and correspond with the professor at her regular UM address noted at the top of this syllabus.

GRADING:

Course work will be accomplished every week. Public Relations Writing is a skills-based course. Skills are acquired and polished over time. They take practice and considerable effort to hone. You will be exposed to ideas and common tools of the trade, and then you will be afforded an opportunity to try your hand at writing and creating materials for specific audiences. There will be assignments, activities, exercises, exams, projects and portfolio building. Each must be completed by its due date and time, which varies by assignment and test. Your success in this course will depend on your willingness to read the textual and supplemental learning materials, successfully complete work, and participate in discussion, exercises, and activities, as assigned.

Additionally, you are responsible for tracking your grade online and meeting with the professor early in the semester if you are concerned about your overall grade. Meeting with the professor early and often can help both parties involved find ways to improve student-instructor understanding and quality of work.

Each assignment is worth 100 points, with categorical weights. They are as follows:

| | |
|------------------------------------|-----|
| Activities/Exercises/Discussion: | 35% |
| Projects/Group Work/Presentations: | 35% |
| Exams/Quizzes: | 25% |
| Portfolio: | 5% |

The basic requirements for this course include these elements:

1. Complete assigned readings from the textbook each week;
2. Check campus email each weekday morning by 8 a.m.;
3. Arrive to each class punctually and prepared;
4. Complete any activities, projects, or assignments on deadline;
5. Pass class exams;
6. Be respectful of classmates and professor at all times;
7. Participate in meaningful class discussion

Quality of Work

All work in this course should follow AP Style, including proper spelling, grammar and language. Form is also important regarding all print collateral.

A large part of public relations is having a polished written concept of what you are communicating. It is also pivotal that you exercise critical thinking skills in order to craft and place messages that resonate with the intended audience. Let these ideas drive the creation of all of your work in the class. Problems in these or other areas will result in the deduction of points.

Work should be professional quality. Attribution is important. In documenting sources, APA or MLA formatting may be used. Help with writing and citing sources can be on Purdue University's Online Writing Lab (<http://owl.english.purdue.edu>.) or by visiting the Writing Center.

DEADLINES:

Meeting deadlines is essential for media professionals. Regular attendance is vital in class. Late work will not be accepted unless there is an unavoidable emergency and documentation is provided, for instance, a car accident that resulted in hospitalization. It is important to notify your professor as soon as possible, and provide the necessary documentation. At that point, arrangements can be made at the professor's discretion. If a student knows about an absence in advance, arrangements may be made with the professor to turn in the work early at the professor's discretion.

ATTENDANCE:

Attendance is mandatory. Students who enter the classroom late are required to sit in the closest seat available near the front of the class by the door to minimize distraction. If a student is late more than four times, the professor may ask the student not to enter the classroom on any future days that they are late.

Students who miss more than three classes are subject to drop one letter grade per absence at the discretion of the professor. Students with more than two tardies are subject to have their final grade reduced by one percentage point per additional tardy.

TENTATIVE COURSE SCHEDULE

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|---------------------------|---|
| Aug. 28 | Review Syllabus/ Lecture Ch. 1/ Homework: Read Ch. 2 |
| Aug. 30 | Lecture Ch. 2/ Homework: Read Ch. 3 |
| Sept. 4 | Labor Day: No Class |
| Sept. 6 | Lab Activity 1: Intro to Digital Organization/Formatting/Print Collateral |
| Sept. 11 | Lecture Ch. 3/ Homework: Read Ch. 4 |
| Sept. 13 | Lab Activity 2: Media Advisory |
| Sept. 18 | Lecture Ch. 4/ Homework: Read Ch. 5 |
| Sept. 20 | Lab Activity 3: Event Release (Pre-event) |
| Sept. 25 | Lab Activity 4: Editor's Workshop |
| Sept. 27 | Cover Event for Post-event Release in LA3 |
| Oct. 2 | Complete Lab Activity 3: Event Release (Post-event) |
| Oct. 4 | Lab Activity 5: Spot News Release |
| Oct. 9 | Lecture Ch. 5/ Homework: Read Ch. 6 |
| Oct. 11 | Lab Activity 6: Begin Feature Story Interview (due Oct. 23) |
| Oct. 16 | FALL BREAK |
| Oct. 18 | Lab Activity 7: Policy Announcement / Homework: Begin Project 1: Write & Build Newsletter |
| Oct. 23 | Lecture Ch. 6 / Turn in Feature Story at Beginning of Class / Homework: Read Ch. 7 |
| Oct. 25 | Lab Activity 8: Position Paper |
| Oct. 30 | Lecture Ch. 7 / Homework: Read Ch. 8 |
| Nov. 1 | Lab Activity 9: Compile Twitter & Facebook Posts |
| Nov. 6 | Lecture Ch. 8 / Homework: Read Ch. 9 & Begin Project 2: Write & Build Brochure |
| Nov. 8 | Lab Activity 10: Media Pitch |
| Nov. 13 | Lecture Ch. 9 |
| Nov. 15 | Lab Activity 11: Write:15 & :30 Radio Spots |
| Nov. 20 | Lecture Ch. 10/ Project 1 Due at End of Class |
| Nov. 22 | THANKSGIVING |
| Nov. 27 | Lab Activity 12: Donor Letter (Direct Mail- Ask) |
| Nov. 29 | Lab General Work Day |
| Dec. 4 | Lab General Work Day |
| Dec. 6 | LAST DAY OF CLASS/ Project 2 Due at End of Class |
| Dec. 13/10:30- 12:30pm | FINAL EXAM |

FIVE PILLARS OF PBRL3421

- *Professionalism:* Students learn the professional and ethical standards of the public relations industry by discussing ethics statements from a variety of professional organizations, working through simulated ethical scenarios from a variety of perspectives and learning how and why legal ramifications may exist within the field. Students continue work on their personal portfolio sites as a way of establishing their personal professional brand.
- *Writing:* Students focus on writing for a variety of public relations formats, including press releases, position or white papers, fact sheets, press conference statements, brochures and newsletters, various social media platforms, and feature releases. Students edit and critique not only their work but also the work of their peers.
- *Multimedia:* Students look at the use of social media in public relations, including the potential for community engagement and management, the importance of consistent organizational voice across multiple platforms and how to translate one message into a variety of social media platforms. Students also add collateral pieces to their online portfolios.
- *Critical Thinking:* Students must demonstrate an understanding of writing for a specific public, writing from a specific point of view for an organization and how to choose the best media channel to communicate their message to a target audience.
- *Media Literacy:* Students learn how to engage with both traditional and social media; how relationships and communities are built within these channels; and how to choose the appropriate media channels based on their desired target audience.

ASSESSMENT

PROFESSIONAL VALUES AND COMPETENCIES FOR PBRL3421

- 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 gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation and, as appropriate, other forms of diversity in domestic society in relation to mass communication.
- 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.
- 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 current tools and technologies appropriate for the communications professions in which they work, and to understand the digital world.

HOW PROFESSIONAL VALUES AND COMPETENCIES WILL BE MET:

Cognitive objectives to be mastered (ability to explain, analyze, understand, think critically):

- Recognize the importance of understanding the diversity (gender, race, ethnicity, etc.) of stakeholder groups and audience to developing content for public relations products and appropriate channels to reach the target audience.
- Explain how the writer's purpose, intended public and requirements of the medium affect style and content.
- Recognize legal and ethical problems associated with public relations writing, including within the freedoms of speech and the press.
- Recognize potential problems and solutions in media relations.
- Understand the differences between writing for various mediums.
- Evaluate their own and other's public relations writing for accuracy, clarity, grammatical correctness and appropriate use of AP style, as well as suitability for specified medium.
- Understand how to use appropriate software and hardware to create public relations products, as well as how to effectively utilize social media channels to communicate with the target audience.

Performance standards to be met (demonstrable skills, abilities, techniques, applied competencies):

- Earn a passing score on written assignments, quizzes and exams.
- Identify an organization's stakeholders and target audiences and the channels that can be used to communicate and engage with them.
- Identify appropriate images/graphics to accompany public relations products based on medium, platform and target audience.
- Identify common legal and ethical problems associated with public relations writing.
- Write a press release, position or white paper, fact sheet, press conference statement, brochure and newsletter for an organization and assemble a press kit, including required images and graphics.
- Apply Associated Press guidelines to written public relations materials.
- Proofread and edit their own work and the work of others.
- Create public relations products using appropriate software and hardware ensuring that products are formatted correctly selected media channels.

HOW ASSESSMENT OF STUDENT LEARNING WILL BE MET:

Awareness:

- Learn the important role of writing in public relations, including journalistic news values, AP style and the various forms of writing for different media.
- Learn about the importance of understanding the diversity and cultural differences of an organization's stakeholders and target audience when developing public relations content.
- Learn about the ethical and legal problems associated with public relations writing.
- Learn about the different public relations products, which tools are used to create them, and what media each is best suited for.

Understanding:

- Understand how to be strategic in public relations writing.
- Recognize how the diversity and cultural difference of an organization's stakeholders and target audience inform the development of public relations content.
- Recognize potential ethical and legal problems associated with public relations writing.
- Understand how to proofread their own and other's writing for clarity, grammatical correctness and appropriate use of AP style.
- Understand which public relations products are appropriate based on the platform and how to create specific public relations products.

Application:

- Identify an organization's stakeholders and target audiences and the channels that can be used to communicate and engage with them.
- Write a press release, position or white paper, fact sheet, press conference statement, brochure and newsletter for an organization and assemble a press kit, including required images and graphics.
- Proofread and edit their own work and the work of others for clarity, grammatical correctness and appropriate use of AP style.
- Create public relations products using appropriate software and hardware ensuring that products are formatted correctly selected media channels.

DEPARTMENT POLICIES

PORTFOLIO REQUIREMENT:

All students in the Department of Journalism and Strategic Media are required to develop and maintain an active portfolio of their work. Undergraduate students are to begin the portfolio in JRSM 3900 and contribute to it from every course thereafter. The portfolio should contain samples of the student's work from his/her courses and/or professional experience and should develop as the student builds skills. Portfolios will undergo a final, external review while students are enrolled in the capstone course for their majors.

Students may use any type of web hosting for their portfolios, but it must have an independent and professional URL. The department requires students to use WordPress to build their portfolio sites. Students are encouraged to consider purchasing a URL and hosting if they plan to use the portfolio for a long term, but must keep the portfolio active for six months following graduation from the University of Memphis.

Students should have a professional email address they plan to use throughout their professional life, via a common email service, such as Gmail or Yahoo.

All portfolios must contain the following items:

- Samples of work from courses and/or professional activities. (Example: Broadcasting students must include a video reel)
- A current résumé
- A personal profile
- Contact information/means of contact
- Social media links

Students might wish to include a blog, video reels, photograph galleries, SoundSlides presentations, design PDFs, audio files, and Storify pieces as examples of professional work. The professional work should ultimately be tailored to the career the student seeks after graduation. Thus, each student's portfolio should show a unique blend of work.

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.

MOBILE PHONES AND LAPTOPS:

Some classes require a tablet, laptop or a smartphone. Others do not. Your instructor will set the policy for her/her specific class.

ATTENDANCE:

Class attendance is mandatory in the Department of Journalism and Strategic Media. 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 because of 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 and Strategic Media 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.

Further, as this is a journalism/mass communication class, students are expected to comply with copyright law, and must have sufficient permission to use any copyrighted materials used in creative projects, unless otherwise informed in cases of exercises or reproduction.

"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.

DEADLINES:

Remember there's a reason "DEAD" makes up half the word "deadline." All deadlines are firm. This is journalism and strategic media. If you get into trouble, talk to your instructor. Exceptions will be made for reasonable circumstances if the student notifies the instructor prior to the due date.

AP STYLE AND GRAMMAR:

All written work in this class should follow the AP Stylebook and accepted rules of grammar and punctuation. If you don't know the style for a particular phrase, look it up or ask your classmates or the instructor.

DISABILITY:

Any student who feels s/he may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact your instructor 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.

DIVERSITY:

Students are required to respect the differences of others and treat all persons with respect. Discriminatory, derogatory and threatening language or behavior will not be tolerated. Further, students are expected to consider their work through a diverse mind. Mass communications reach a mass audience, and students should be aware of how those messages are received by a diverse audience.

WEATHER POLICY:

Always check with local media and the University of Memphis website regarding inclement weather. If the university is closed or classes are canceled, this course will not meet. However, students will still be responsible for that day's work.