

Public Relations Writing

PBRL 3421-M50

Fall 2017

Kim Marks, APR

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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

JRSM 2121, PBRL 3400

TEXTBOOKS

- Newsom, D., & Haynes, J. (2014). *Public relations writing: Form and style* (10th ed.). Boston: Wadsworth Cengage Learning.
- *The Associated Press Stylebook 2016* (or 2015). New York: Basic Books.

CLASSROOM FORMAT:

This course is delivered online in an asynchronous format. In other words, we have no scheduled meeting time. This can be convenient for you, but it also means that it is essential for you to be an organized, motivated student.

You must have internet access and Microsoft Word to generate a “.doc” or “.docx” extension. All assignments **MUST** be filed in a “.doc” or “.docx” format; type must be double-spaced with indented paragraphs.

ACCESSING THE COURSE WEBSITE:

1. Go to the University of Memphis home page: <http://www.memphis.edu>. **The course page will be available Aug. 28 – Dec. 14.**
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 UofM eCourseware link
6. Down on that page, in the Fall 2017 course list available to you, click on the link for Public Relations Writing to enter your course and read the instructions on the welcoming page

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

Course work will be accomplished every week. Each assignment must be completed by its due date and time (Central Standard Time), which varies by assignment. Check each due time to ensure that you post by the deadline.

As part of this class you will be required to earn your Hootsuite Platform Certification. The Hootsuite Platform Certification is industry-recognized and demonstrates your expertise with the social media management platform Hootsuite. Details about this process will be provided separately.

If you are not already on Twitter, or if you want to set up a separate professional account for the purposes of this class, you need to set up an account with a bio and a photo and post your “handle” or Twitter user name on the class discussion board. At a minimum, you need to follow me and your classmates. I will also post additional suggestions of accounts for you to follow. If you are new to Twitter or haven’t used it much, start getting into the habit of both posting and browsing your stream a little at least once a day. Write down any questions you may have about using Twitter and we can discuss on the class discussion board. I’ll also post resources that will help you navigate Twitter.

Other parts of your grade will come from writing and submitting assignments, and participating in online discussions and Twitter chats. These assignments must be submitted per instructions; no credit will be given outside of the proper submission guidelines.

You will need to get in the habit of checking eCourseware and Twitter at least once a day. I use them both frequently to communicate with the class, and you will use them to communicate with each other.

Additionally, you will be required to update your online portfolio (must be in WordPress) to showcase your work and continue to build your professional online presence. Specific requirements and details will be provided separately.

GRADING

There are 965 possible points in this class. At the end of the semester, your class average will be calculated and fractions will be rounded to the nearest whole number. Letter grades will be determined according to the scale below.

Writing Assignments	
Fact sheet	75 points
News release	75 points
Feature release	75 points
Position paper	75 points
Brochure	75 points
Social media release	80 points
Media Kit	60 points
Hootsuite Certificate	100 points
Twitter Chat	50 points
Personal Portfolio	50 points
Personal Resume	50 points
Class Participation	200 points
Total	965 points

A+	946-965	B+	891-907	C+	836-852	D+	781-797
A	924-945	B	869-890	C	814-835	D	759-780
A-	908-923	B-	853-868	C-	798-813	D-	743-758
F	Below 743						

QUALITY OF WORK

All work in this course should follow AP Style, including proper spelling, grammar and language. A large part of public relations is having a polished written concept of what you are communicating. This includes all class work and presentations. Problems in these or other areas will result in the deduction of points.

I expect your work to be good – and to be yours. What is not yours should be fully cited. In documenting sources, you must use APA formatting. If you need help with writing and citing sources, please see me for resources. In addition, Purdue University's Online Writing Lab is an excellent resource, and can be found at <http://owl.english.purdue.edu>.

I'm willing to read over and provide comments/edits on rough drafts of all work, but require a minimum of 24 hours for turnaround. This should be done via email (ksmarks@memphis.edu) NOT eCourseware.

QUESTIONS ABOUT GRADES

If you would like to ask about a grade, please make an appointment to meet with me via email, video or phone conference. If you have a question or problem with a grade, exam question, or in-class assignment, you have 48 hours after the assignment is returned to you to contact me, or the grade stands. Your question or appeal must be stated in writing, citing your position and why you feel the mark is incorrect. The appeal should be sent via email (not eCourseware) within the stated time frame.

Additionally, you are responsible for tracking your grade online and communicating with me early in the semester if you are concerned about your overall grade. Communicating with me early and often can help us find ways to improve your understanding and quality of work.

COURSE SCHEDULE

This is a basic schedule for topics and major assignments over the course of the semester. Although every effort will be made to stick with this schedule, please understand that changes to the schedule may occur. All changes will be announced as soon as they are known.

Week One **Course Introduction/Public Relations and the Writer (CH 1)**

Aug. 28 – Sept. 1 Online orientation module
Defining PR / PR writing
Publics
Fact sheets (Assignment)

Week Two **Persuasion (CH 3) / News Release (CH 10)**

Sept. 4 Labor Day
Sept. 5 – 8 Persuasion
News release (Assignment)

Week Three **Writing Principles (CH 6) / Feature Release (CH 10)**

Sept. 11 – 15 Writing: style & content
Feature release (Assignment)
FACT SHEET DUE

Week Four **The PR Process (CH 4)**

Sept. 18 – 22 Research & environmental scanning
Position paper (Assignment)
NEWS RELEASE DUE

Week Five **Writing to be understood (CH 7)**

Sept. 25 – 29 Grammar, Spelling & Punctuation
FEATURE RELEASE DUE

Week Six **Writing for social media (CH 8)**

Oct. 2 – 6 SEO
Social media platforms for PR
Social media news release (Assignment)
POSITION PAPER DUE

Week Seven **More writing for social media**

Oct. 9 – 13 Social media channels
Planning and crafting content
Oct. 14 – 17 *Fall Break*

Week Eight **Portfolios and Resumes**

Oct. 18 – 20 Designing your online portfolio
Writing your resume (Assignment)
SOCIAL MEDIA NEWS RELEASE DUE

Week Nine Oct. 23 – 27	Internal communication (CH 13) Organizational voice Brochure (Assignment)
Week 10 Oct. 30 – Nov. 3	Media Kits, Media Pitches (CH 9) Media Kit (Assignment) RESUME DUE
Week 11 Nov. 6 – 10	Media relations / Blogger relations BROCHURE DUE
Week 12 Nov. 13 – 17	Writing for audio and visual (CH 10) Broadcast writing Infographics and other visuals
Week 13 Nov. 20 - 21 Nov. 22 – 26	Portfolio / Resume Work / Media Kit Worktime HOOTSUITE CERTIFICATION DUE <i>Thanksgiving</i>
Week 14 Nov. 27 – Dec. 1	Crisis Communication (CH 16) Planning for a crisis
Week 15 Dec. 4 – 6	Wrapping up MEDIA KIT DUE (Dec. 6)

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.