

Public Relations Writing

PBRL 3421-001

Spring 2018

MW 9:10 a.m. – 11:10 a.m., Meeman 206

Dr. Melissa Janoske

Office: Meeman 306

Office Hours: M 11:30 a.m. – 3:30 p.m., TR 1 – 3 p.m., and by appointment

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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

The Associated Press stylebook 2016 (or 2015). New York: Basic Books. Other readings may be assigned in class and will be posted to eCourseware.

CLASSROOM FORMAT

This class will be presented in lecture and laboratory formats. There is also opportunity for group work on several assignments. Students will write and submit assignments that will be returned with feedback via eCourseware meant to encourage student improvement over the course of the semester. Students are strongly encouraged to discuss any questions or writing struggles with me as they become evident.

GRADING

There are 1,000 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
Infographic	75 points
Social media release	75 points

Media Kit 50 points

Personal Portfolio 50 points

Personal Resume 50 points

Video Project 200 points

HootSuite completion 50 points

Video 100 points

Twitter chat 50 points

Class Participation 200 points

Total 1,000 points

A+	967-1000	B+	867-899	C+	767-799	D+	667-699
A	934-966	B	834-866	C	734-766	D	634-665
A-	900-933	B-	800-833	C-	700-733	D-	600-633
						F	Below 600

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 may use either APA or MLA 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 am 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, not eCourseware.

Questions about Grades

If you would like to ask about a grade, please make an appointment to meet with me

outside of class time, as I will not discuss grades via email or during class. 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 turned in to the professor or sent via email within the stated time frame.

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.

Attendance

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

No points will be deducted from your final grade if you have four or fewer absences. Each additional absence beyond those four will result in a deduction of five percentage points from your final numerical average. For example, if your final average is 83 (B) and you have five absences, your course grade would be a 78 (C+).

This absence policy includes **ALL** absences. It will be assumed that each absence is valid. If you are on a school-sponsored trip or are ill and miss class, it will count. No verification, explanation, or note is necessary. Habitual or excessive late arrivals to/early leaving from class can combine to count as an absence.

In addition, frequently we will engage in class exercises that will count as participation points; if you are not in class, you will have 24 hours from the time of class to complete the participation assignment and turn it in via eCourseware. Doing so is entirely your responsibility; if the participation assignment is not completed within those 24 hours, no participation points will be given.

Late work will be accepted, but points will be deducted for lateness. The absolute final day to turn in any late work will be the final day of class for the semester (9:10 a.m. on April 25, 2018). No work, late or otherwise, will be accepted beyond that date.

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 some material may require more or less discussion and class time. Thus, changes to the schedule may occur. All changes will be announced in class.

<i>Week Of</i>	<i>Topic</i>	<i>Assignment(s)</i>
January 16-19	Syllabus/Course Overview	Discuss assignments
January 22-26	Public relations writing	Define public relations Publics Socialnomics
January 29-February 2	Persuasion	Fact sheet due Descriptive writing
February 5-9	Public relations process	Persuasion News release due
February 12-16	Environmental scanning	Media relations GSPS, editing
February 19-23	Relationship management	Feature release due
February 26-March 2	Writing to be understood	Organizational voice
March 5-9	No Class—Spring Break	
March 12-16	Writing for social media Blogger relations	Pitching Position paper due
March 19-23	Internal communication	
March 26-30	Diversity SMNR due Twitter chat	Video project due
April 2-6	Writing for audio and visual	Portfolio/Resumes Infographic due
April 9-13	Crisis communication	Resume/letter due
April 16-20	Law and ethics	
April 23-25	Final Presentations	Extra credit; HootSuite due
Final Exam	Friday, April 27 @ 10:30 a.m.	

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*: JOUR 3421 focuses on writing for a variety of public relations formats, including press releases, position or white papers, fact sheets, press conference statements, brochures and newsletters, writing for various social media platforms and feature releases. Students also 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 accomplish both of those tasks.
- *Media Literacy*: Students increase their media literacy by looking at how to engage with a variety of traditional and social media, to see how relationships and communities are built within these channels and how to interact and engage with others in the media appropriately.

ASSESSMENT

PROFESSIONAL VALUES AND COMPETENCIES FOR PBRL3421

- 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 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;
- 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 tools and technologies appropriate for the communications professions in which they work.

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 various mediums.

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

Students will:

- Earn a passing score on written assignments, quizzes and exams;
- Apply Associated Press guidelines to written materials;
- Proofread and edit their own work and the work of others;
- Pitch story ideas to news media; and
- Respond to crisis communication situations.

HOW ASSESSMENT OF STUDENT LEARNING WILL BE MET FOR PBRL3421:

This class is designed to equip students with the skills needed to write correctly in controlled, mass and social media outlets for various audiences.

Awareness:

- Learn about the important role of writing in public relations, including journalistic news values, AP-style and the various forms of writing for different media.

Understanding:

- Understand how to be strategic in public relations writing.

Application:

- Create collateral materials that are common in public relations practice; write for various forms of media; respond to a crisis communication situation.

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.