

Public Relations Writing

JOUR 3421-001

MW 11:30 a.m. – 1:30 p.m., Meeman 206

Fall 2015

Instructor: Kim Marks, APR

Office: Meeman Journalism Building, Room 314

Office Hours: MW 10-11:15 a.m.; TR 9-10:15 a.m. or by appointment

Phone: 901.678.5475; Cell Phone: 619.316.5498

Email: kmarks@memphis.edu

Twitter: [@kmarks](https://twitter.com/kmarks)

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

CATALOG/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

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

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 meant to encourage student improvement over the course of the semester.

ATTENDANCE

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 four 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. Additionally, we will engage in class exercises that will count as participation points; if you are not in class, you cannot make up the participation points.

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.

<i>Writing Assignments</i>		
Fact sheet		50 points
News release		75 points
Feature release		75 points
Position paper		75 points
Brochure		50 points
Social media release		50 points
<i>Media Kit</i>		75 points
<i>Personal Portfolio</i>		75 points
<i>Personal Resume</i>		75 points
<i>Video Project</i>		200 points
<i>HootSuite completion</i>	50 points	
<i>Video</i>	100 points	
<i>Twitter chat</i>	50 points	
<i>Class Participation</i>		200 points
<i>Total</i>		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>.

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 or sent via email within the stated time frame.

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

(M) Aug. 24	Opening	Syllabus & Course Overview
(W) Aug. 26	PR Writing	Discuss Video projects/client
(M) Aug. 31	More PR Writing	Discuss Fact Sheet
(W) Sep. 2	Chapter 4 – Research & Environmental Scanning	
(M) Sep. 7	Chapter 3 – Persuasion	Fact Sheet due Writing for publics
(W) Sep. 9	Chapter 5 – PR Process Press Releases & media relations	What is a press release?
(M) Sep. 14	Relationship Mgmt. Chapter 2 – Ethics	News release due Ethics scenarios
(W) Sep. 16	Chapter 6 – Editing Writing to be understood	
(M) Sep. 21	Chapter 7 – GSP	Class edits – feature release
(W) Sep. 23	Chapter 8 – Social Media	Sultan of Snap! Coke Happy! Discuss SMNR
(M) Sep. 28	Guest speaker – Shannon Little	Feature release due
(W) Sep. 30	Video work day	
(M) Oct. 5	Twitter Chat TBD	
(W) Oct. 7	Video work day	
(F) Oct. 9	-----	Video project due
(M) Oct. 12	NO CLASS – Fall Break	
(W) Oct. 14	Organizational voice	Discuss position papers
(M) Oct. 19	Blogger relations	Pitching SMNR due
(W) Oct. 21	Internal communication	class edits – position paper
(M) Oct. 26	Infographics/Brochures Emoji...	Watch video projects (T) Discuss Brochures
(W) Oct. 28	Media kits & editorial calendars Diversity	Position paper due
(M) Nov. 2	Writing for Audio / Visual New Media	
(W) Nov. 4	More Writing for Audio / Visual New Media	

(M) Nov. 9	Crisis Communication	
(W) Nov. 11	Crisis Communication	Tragic Love Story Brochures due
(M) Nov. 16		
(W) Nov. 18		
(M) Nov. 23		
(W) Nov. 25	No Class – Thanksgiving Break	
(M) Nov. 30	Portfolio Work Day	
(W) Dec. 2	Last Day of Class Final project presentations	Portfolio/media kit/resume/extra credit/HootSuite due
Final Exam	Monday, Dec. 7 @ 10:30 a.m.	

FIVE PILLARS OF JOUR3421

- *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 JOUR3421

- 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 JOUR3421:

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.

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

PORTFOLIO REQUIREMENT:

All Department of Journalism undergraduate students are required to develop and maintain an active portfolio of their work. Students are to begin the portfolio in JOUR 2121 and contribute to it during every skills course thereafter. The portfolio should contain samples of the student's work from courses and/or professional experience and should develop as the student builds skills. Portfolios will undergo a final review while students are enrolled in the capstone course for their concentrations.

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 <http://iam.memphis.edu> 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 to be used during class or to complete class assignments. Others do not allow them. Your instructor will set the policy for her/her specific 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. Students are permitted three total unexcused absences without penalty. After three absences, the student's final grade will be deducted one letter grade for each absence. After seven unexcused absences, the student will fail the course. Absences for illness and other catastrophic emergencies, such as a death in the family, must be documented (e.g. doctor's note or obituary) to be excused from the total absence count. Students with excessive unexcused absences are encouraged to withdraw from the course prior to the drop deadline.

DEADLINES:

All deadlines are firm. This is journalism and mass communications. Assignments turned in late will NOT be graded. Late work is not accepted unless prior arrangements have been made with the instructor. Students are NOT permitted to make up assignments, quizzes, tests, etc. that occurred during an unexcused absence. Students who will miss class and/or a deadline because of an excused absence are expected to notify the instructor immediately upon knowing the absence will occur; exceptions will be made for reasonable circumstances. Students who are absent during

the final exam are not permitted to make up the exam and will earn a grade of 0, which might result in failure of the course.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY:

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, a student receiving any assistance from others for work assigned to be done on his/her own, and violations of copyright law as acts of academic dishonesty punishable to the degree determined appropriate by the course instructor and department chair. Penalties might include grade reductions or 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)

Intellectual property and copyright guidelines

1. Ideas cannot be copyrighted, but the way they are described can.
2. Anything set down in a tangible form, i.e., written, is by law copyrighted.
3. If, in a paraphrase, your work is “substantially similar” to a copyrighted work, you are guilty of copyright infringement.
4. A citation indicates where you got material. However, that portion you do not show as a direct quote must be “substantially original” to you. In other words, you can’t just paste in something from another’s work, put a citation at the bottom and call it your own. You need a full rewrite in your own words and syntax so the unquoted material is “substantially original” to you.

Plagiarism: From UM Student Handbook: The term “plagiarism” includes, but is not limited to, the use, by paraphrase or direct quotation, of the published or unpublished work of another person without full or clear acknowledgement. It also includes the unacknowledged use of materials prepared by another person or agency engaged in the selling of term papers or other academic materials.

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 me privately to discuss your specific needs. Please contact the Office for Disability Services at 901-678-2880 in 110 Wilder Tower 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:

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.

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.